THE LETTERS OF MARIUS:

OR,

REFLECTIONS

UPON THE

PEACE,

THE

EAST-INDIA BILL,

AND THE

PRESENT CRISIS;

By THOMAS DAY, Esq.

——— Non ante revellar,
Exanimem quam te complectar, Roma, tuumque
Nomen libertas, et inanem prosequar umbram.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is neceſſary to give a reaſon why the following reflections are publiſhed under the fictitious name of MARIUS. They were originally intended to be printed in the public papers, and the firſt five letters were written before the author changed his plan. But the bulk into which they inſenſibly ſwelled, made them ſeem more adapted to the form under which they now appear: at the ſame time neither the urgency of the preſent criſis, nor the variety of ſubjects to be treated, allowed him to melt them down anew, and give them the uniformity of a continued eſſay. The neceſſity of immediately preſenting ſuch ſentiments as theſe, if they are preſented at all, to the public, has alſo induced the author to publiſh with a precipitation, which he would otherwiſe diſapprove.

THE

THE

LETTERS OF MARIUS, &c.

LETTER I.

To Dr. JEBB.

SIR,

IF, in the moſt dangerous criſis, the conſul Varro was thought to deſerve the thanks of the Roman people whoſe very exiſtence he had endangered, merely, "quod non deſperâſſet de republicâ," with what honours ſhould the Engliſh nation exalt your name?——In the midſt of dangers, ſo much the more formidable as the internal corruption of any ſtate is more to be feared than every external ſhock, your uniform conduct has been to animate by your

example, and to enlighten by your underſtanding, the wavering aud dejected minds of your countrymen. While this has uniformly been your public conduct, your private example ſeems deſtined to reſcue the injured term of Patriotiſm from the unmerited ridicule which had been brought upon it by the treachery of its pretended friends.

While every raſh adventurer, while every ruined libertine, could find a beneficial trade in duping the credulity of the people; while every broken author, gambler, pimp, or paraſite, when deprived of the hope of ſubſiſting by his honeſt induſtry, could promiſe himſelf a decent ſubſiſtence, if not the enjoyment of his favourite vices, by enliſting himſelf under the banners of the popular cauſe, it was no wonder that cauſe ſhould be ſo often abandoned and betrayed as we have ſeen it. But, if we lament the miſapplication of the public confidence, in a variety of inſtances, we muſt, at leaſt, allow that the evil has not been unproductive of utility. There is a limit beyond which credulity itſelf will not ſubmit to be deceived; and that limit the Engliſh people have happily attained. I have not yet heard that the political qualms of Lord North againſt ſecret influence, and the harangues of Mr. Fox in favour of a parliamentary majority,

majority, have made a ſingle proſelyte out of their own virtuous houſe. There, indeed, a ſaving faith, according to the true orthodox form of "Credo quia impoſſibile," has given a wonderful efficacy to the word; and many a ſtubborn infidel, who would not have believed "even though one had riſen from the dead," has already yielded to the bare promiſe of a ſhower of manna, or a ſecond miracle of the loaves and fiſhes. But with the body of the people the caſe is widely different. They have learned to attend to the ſtubborn voice of facts, as well as to the more ſoothing notes of oratorical perſuaſion. They demand a certain conſiſtency of life and manners, the delicate colouring of private honeſty and integrity, to fill up the flowing outline of public profeſſion, and to make it worthy of a people's admiration. This, ſir, is what envy itſelf will not deny to be your undiſputed claim. The Engliſh people, therefore, receive you as their undoubted benefactor, and, whatever may be the conſequence of your exertions, allow you all the glory which is due to the purity and diſintereſtedneſs of your intentions.

But it is not enough, in public conteſts, to have gained the cleareſt praiſe of integrity, unleſs we can add to it that of diſcretion and

judgment. Cato expiated, within the walls of Utica, the ill-timed deference which he had ſhewn to Scipio; and Cicero paid with his blood the price of his fond idolatry of Octavius. The Engliſh people, that have been always doomed to expiate either the treachery or the puſillanimity of their leaders, will find it difficult to determine which of theſe qualities has produced the greateſt miſchief. While the one has given up all their rights at the very moment when they might have been eſtabliſhed, the other has repeatedly checked them in their moſt ſucceſsful career, with ideal difficulties, and delays, which are always friendly to uſurpation as they are dangerous to liberty.

Never did this appear more evident than in the year 1779, which gave birth to the aſſociations of the people. Wearied out at that time with the abſurd conduct of an unjuſt war, into which they had been betrayed by every ſpecies of falſehood and miſrepreſentation, they turned their eyes, with a gratitude little ſhort of adoration, upon that ſudden light which unexpectedly roſe upon their darkened horizon. Nor can it be doubted, that it was much leſs the people who were then wanting to their own cauſe, than that they were, as uſual, deſerted by their leaders. A few, a very few diſintereſted men, among whom

whom it will ever be your praiſe to have been the foremoſt, ſtood forth, and called the public attention to the radical and inveterate corruptions of the conſtitution. "In vain," ſaid they to that body of the gentry and nobility which ſupported the cauſe of oppoſition, "do you attempt to palliate, or temporize with your diſeaſe. In vain do you diſtract the attention of the people upon the trifling details of their government, and cheat them with idle viſions of œconomical reforms. Were the public miſeries occaſioned either by accidental incapacity, or accidental misfortune, we might hope for relief from time, and ſpare ourſelves the trouble of exertion; but, where a long unbroken ſeries of events has been unfolded, all tending to the ſame end, and that end the depreſſion of the people and the deſtruction of their rights, it calls for all our vigilance and virtue. Even now, the meaſure of our wrongs is full; nor have we any remaining hope but from courage founded upon deſpair. For whom will ye invoke in this extremity of diſtreſs, but yourſelves? —Will ye prefer your petitions to the throne which has ſo often ſpurned, ſo often rejected them; and hope that a ſovereign will undertake the patronage of public freedom, when it is no longer defended by the ſpirit of a nation?

Hiſtory

Hiſtory, indeed, commemorates ſovereigns who have practiſed the virtues and the philoſophy of private life, who have loved their friends, pardoned their enemies, and endured the approach of truth; ſome have even deſcended from their thrones, and ſought for happineſs in obſcurity: but the example is yet wanting of a prince who has loſt an opportunity of increaſing his power, or reſigned the uſurpations of his predeceſſors.

"But according to the principles of the Engliſh conſtitution, you have little either to hope or to fear from the private qualities of a ſovereign: or, rather, by an happy fiction which makes every miniſter that ſhares the executive power anſwerable for his own omiſſions, the prince may enjoy all the reverence of his virtues, while his name is never compromiſed by the guilty projects of ambition. But however implicitly we may admit the maxim, That a king can do no wrong, flattery itſelf has never yet applied it to his ſervants; and ſhould we appeal to experience, it may perhaps be doubted whether the impeccability of the ſovereign is not compenſated by a contrary quality in his miniſters. Nothing then remains but that ye uſe the only check which the conſtitution has provided, and order your repreſentatives to impeach the guilty

authors

authors of your miſeries. But, alas! ſuch is the peculiar unhappineſs of our ſituation, that thoſe whom we ſhould apply to for redreſs are the very authors of our misfortunes. For is there a ſingle miniſter, that has inſulted the patience or eluded the vengeance of the people, that is not fenced in by a majority of thoſe who call themſelves your repreſentatives? What meaſure has been ſo ſtigmatized by public deteſtation, ſo openly inimical to the liberties and intereſts of a free people, as not to be ſanctified by a majority of that honourable houſe? If we take their whole ſucceſſive conduct, from their open and indecent attacks upon the deareſt privileges of the people in the Middleſex election, down to their premeditated invaſion of the American rights, and all the ſubſequent horrors of the civil war in which we are now engaged, is there a ſingle action worthy of the generoſity, greatneſs, or underſtanding of the Engliſh people?—Nor do we found our opinion upon vague ſurmize or uncertain conjecture. Whatever undoubted virtue and ability this country can boaſt in its public councils, whatever characters of ſuperior luſtre, have all combined in vain to ſtem the torrent; and they now appeal from the venal votes of a corrupt majority to the ſober and unbiaſſed ſuffrages of

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the people. Who can doubt the integrity, the diſintereſtedneſs, more than the talents of a Fox, and Burke? And when you behold the fruitleſs efforts of men like theſe, to point their country's thunders at the head of its implacable foe, and hear them publicly aſſert that wiſdom and ability alike are vain; that all the former ſpirit of our parliament is evaporated, and has left nothing behind but blind ſervility to a miniſter, can we heſitate to admit the fatal truth? —No! could there yet remain a doubt, we feel it in the degradation of our country, and the increaſing miſery of its inhabitants.——Rouſe then, if ever, ye laſt remaining hopes of liberty, and unite for its defence!"

MARIUS.

LET-

LETTER II.

To Dr. JEBB.

SIR

WHOEVER would write adequately concerning public affairs, muſt not confine his attention to the preſent moment, but muſt include a ſeries of paſt events, as neceſſary to eſtabliſh his opinions both of the preſent and the future. With this intention, I recurred, in my laſt letter, to the year 1779, and gave a ſummary of what was then addreſſed to the people, by thoſe who coincided in your ſentiments of the cauſe of national grievances: I ſhall now drop the third perſon, and proceed, in my own, to ſubmit to the judgment of the public the arguments in favour of correcting the repreſentation of the people which were then uſed; and which are now neceſſary to be remembered, if we wiſh for any adequate remedy to the evils which ſurround us.

Hiſtory furniſhes us with a variety of forms in which the human ſpecies have exiſted under

different modifications both of tyranny and freedom. Indeed, every thing is ſo mixed in human affairs, that it is perhaps impoſſible to produce an inſtance of any government which is purely either the one, or the other. Scarcely any arbitrary government exiſts, which is not limited in its exceſſes, either by the prejudices of manners or religion; ſcarcely any free one which does not contain within itſelf the ſeeds of its own future deſtruction. This conſideration has given wonderful ſcope to the ingenuity of thoſe who wiſh to confound the underſtandings of men, and to miſrepreſent the plaineſt facts. You that, for the ſake of alleviating the real miſeries of your fellow-creatures, are continually obliged to conſider thoſe miſeries in their moſt hideous forms, know that nothing is more difficult than to define the preciſe boundaries of health and diſeaſe: yet the wildeſt ſceptic will not deny that theſe ideas have a real exiſtence, and that it is the eſſential intereſt of man to inveſtigate them with all the accuracy he poſſeſſes.

In politics, it muſt be confeſſed, we can ſcarcely proceed a ſtep, without finding equal cauſe to lament the imperfect nature of paſt experience, and the yet more imperfect manner in which it is recorded. But in what ſcience, unleſs

unleſs it be pure mathematics, can we pretend to certainty, or even accuracy? The conduct of life, therefore, muſt either be permitted to probability, or left to fluctuate at random. And, if we obſerve the common behaviour of our fellow-creatures, we muſt acknowledge that they do not ſo much ſuffer from the ſcantineſs of their materials, as from a want of diligence and judgment in application of them.

Without involving myſelf, therefore, in all the ſubtleties of metaphyſical diſtinctions, I ſhall ſimply obſerve, that one common fact is univerſally found in every free government; a public and legal method, by which the ſpirit of the nation at large may declare itſelf to its governors, and either confirm or alter the courſe of meaſures. Wherever we turn our eyes, I aſſert that this circumſtance has been always found to accompany public liberty, and to meaſure its extent and duration: nor is there a ſingle example, in hiſtory, of any country that has not been enſlaved the very moment when it ſuffered either violence or cajolery to deprive it of this ineſtimable privilege.

Nor will it, perhaps, be loſs of time, if I pauſe here to anſwer a common ſophiſm which I have remarked in all the writers on the other ſide of the queſtion. Government, they, indeed, al-

low to be a truſt, and to be exerciſed for the good of the people; but as to the actual conſent and will of the people themſelves, they place it entirely out of the queſtion. They ſelect, with wonderful ingenuity and perſeverance, all the inſtances of popular fury, caprice, and ingratitude, which they can find in hiſtory, to contraſt them with the moſt favourable periods of arbitrary government; and then they triumphantly aſk, whether all theſe outrages and excuſes compoſe freedom, while juſtice, order, and humanity as naturally conſtitute ſervitude. But this is either a wilful, or involuntary confuſion of ideas. There can be no doubt but there are periods in the life of every individual, when it might be more conducive to his intereſt to be under the controul of a diſcreet friend, than abandoned to the weakneſs and inexperience of his own judgment. No doubt, but there are many inſtances in which you could extend the benefits of the medical art, were you able to enforce your precepts of regimen and exerciſe by a ſalutary degree of reſtraint; but will any one argue ſo inaccurately as, for that reaſon, to aſſert, that men would become more free by being ſubjected to the arbitrary will of a phyſician, in all that concerned their health; more eſpecially, were one of his ſubalterns daily

to

to feel their pulſe, in order to determine the alterations which took place ?

In truth, nothing can be more inaccurate than to produce the miſchiefs which may ſometimes ariſe from liberty, or the advantages which may accidentally reſult from ſlavery, as a reaſon for confounding the ideas. The man is certainly more free than the child, although in many inſtances it might be for his advantage ſtill to tremble at the ferula ; and the American ſavage, even while he is periſhing for hunger in his native woods, than the beſt-fed negro of the iſlands. But to argue with any regard for accuracy or logic, the battery ſhould be changed ; and it muſt be maintained, that it is really more for the intereſt of any nation to abandon its claim to liberty, than to ſubmit to the inconveniences of preſerving it. This is the ſuppoſition which, under a variety of diſguiſes, has been frequently obtruded upon the preſs ; and therefore I will beſtow ſome conſideration upon it, that I may not be afterwards interrupted in the progreſs of theſe letters.

I have often thought it a wonderful fallacy of ſome divines to depreciate human reaſon in order to exalt religion : for, unleſs that religion be imparted by particular inſpiration to every individual, what other method is there of eſtabliſhing it, than proofs adapted to his reaſon ? The more, there-

therefore, you convince him of the weakneſs and fallibility of that faculty, the more you muſt incline him, were he conſiſtent, to doubt his power of judging concerning the particular evidence you propoſe. But this fallacy does not ſeem to be confined to the venerable order of the clergy. Politicians practiſe it at leaſt with equal ſucceſs, when they deſcant upon the blindneſs and ignorance of, what they call, the multitude. The paſſions of mankind, they tell you, are ſo ſtrong, and their reaſoning powers ſo weak, that nothing but anarchy and confuſion can reſult from their being permitted to govern themſelves. What then is the remedy? Would one not expect that they would bring ſome god or angel down to take the management of affairs upon himſelf, and atone for human imperfections? But here they are inferior to their friends the clergy. Inſtead of this device, they have only the very contemptible one of ſelecting a ſmall part of the ſpecies, who are not only to govern themſelves, but all the reſt. So that this unavoidable contradiction ariſes from the ſuppoſition; mankind are totally incapable of governing themſelves, yet they are not only capable of governing themſelves, but millions of others at the ſame time. Nor is it poſſible to avoid this conſequence, by aſſerting that certain individuals excel in prudence

dence and wiſdom, and therefore are by nature adapted for this purpoſe: for what are the marks that diſtinguiſh theſe individuals, and who is to judge of their authenticity? If the bulk of mankind is too groſs and blind to decide concerning this ſuperior excellence, it muſt be ſome-body elſe that determines for it. But how are we to diſtinguiſh theſe few, that, like the Venetian electors, are to chuſe for all the reſt; and that without a previous election, or even a form of ballot? If it be merely the few, in oppoſition to the many, it will be poſſible to divide the largeſt number till you reduce it to the ſmalleſt; but it is an original idea to ſuppoſe that ignorance and ſtupidity may be divided and ſub-divided, till they become knowledge and underſtanding.

But here is the general fallacy both of divines and politicians: both begin by teaching you to diſtruſt yourſelf, and addreſs themſelves, if I may uſe the expreſſion, to the hypocondriaciſm of human nature. When their repreſentations have ſucceeded to a certain degree, they give you to underſtand that the only cure for all your evils is to adopt their own particular ſyſtem either of faith or government. What is orthodoxy, true religion, and the will of heaven, on the one ſide; or hereſy, ſchiſm, and idolatry on the other? — The particular opinions which every

every divine holds forth, or which he chuſes to condemn.——In the words of Hudibras,

" What makes all doctrines plain and clear ?
" About two hundred pounds a year."

Thus if you demand of the politician what is order, good government, and political wiſdom? Will he not anſwer, if he ſpeak truth, the ſubmiſſion of mankind to the particular opinions which I entertain, or which I am paid for diſſeminating.—If, on the contrary, what is rebellion, faction, ſedition, treaſon ?—Different degrees of the opinions which either my avarice or ambition would prove falſe. But ſhould you preſs him further, he muſt be compelled either to admit the general right of all the ſpecies to judge as well as act for themſelves, or elſe to involve himſelf in inextricable contradictions.

MARIUS.

LETTER

LETTER III.

To Dr. JEBB.

SIR

HE that builds, from caprice or vanity, may content himſelf with the flimſy decorations and patch-work ornaments of modern taſte. However weak may be the foundations, however frail the materials, the edifice will be the wonder of a day, and may then unheeded crumble into ruins. Had I intended theſe papers to be the auxiliaries of party, or the inſtruments of private ambition, I had haſtened to ſeize the periſhable topic of the hour, before it gave place to the next new object of faſhionable purſuit and wonder. But however vain may be the attempt, however inadequate my ambition, I have propoſed to myſelf an higher object: I aim at placing that ſolid information before the public, which may guide their judgment, and direct their conduct. I ſhall too ſoon be obliged to quit the peaceful walks of ſpeculation for the crooked and dangerous labyrinths of modern ſtateſmen and politicians.

However ſtrong may be the arguments in favour of political liberty which are produced by the underſtanding alone, thoſe which are derived from experience will give them additional force.

Man is forbidden by the laws of his organization to aſpire at immortality; yet why ſhould diſſolution be equally the fate of every human inſtitution? May we not conceive a ſociety eſtabliſhed on ſuch a baſis, as to brave the ſhocks of time; and to remain, like the ſeveral ſpecies of the animal world, immortal and incorruptible, though compoſed of a thouſand periſhable generations?

Alas! it will be anſwered, human inſtitutions, though at longer intervals, are equally mortal with the individuals that compoſe them. To raiſe an eternal fabric, with materials that are in a continual ſtate of fluctuation and decay, is a vainer attempt than "to build a city and a tower whoſe top may reach unto Heaven."

What government is recorded, within the annals of time, ſo wiſely framed, ſo ſolidly eſtabliſhed, as not to have degenerated into tyranny; and what tyranny that has not ſoon been overturned, by relaxing all the ſprings of national defence, and enfeebling the community in order to enſlave it? Nay, the very inſtitutions of Heaven itſelf, the inſtant they were entruſted to human paſſions for their ſupport, have ſcarcely met with

with a different fate, or conſtituted an exception. The firſt apoſtles of chriſtianity were mild and lowly, like the founder of their faith. They addreſſed themſelves to the reaſon of men, and propagated their religion by perſuaſion. They abjured the luxuries and the enjoyments of ſenſe; they ſubmitted to every inſult; they refuſed the offered benefits of their friends, and deprecated, only by prayers and bleſſings, the malice of their enemies. But mark the change! The inſtant a royal convert has given the clergy entrance to a court, they abjure every principle of their religion. Then we loſe ſight of a ſuffering, and begin the æra of a triumphant church. The immediate ſucceſſors of fiſhermen and mechanics conſent to be cloathed in purple and ſcarlet, to wallow in all the ſenſualities of the moſt abandoned age and country, and to diſgrace the ſimplicity of the moſt ſpiritual religion, by the rites and ceremonies of the groſſeſt. The power of conſulting about the interpretation of the articles of their religion, which was expreſſly given to the whole body of chriſtians, is, in a ſhort time, monopolized by the clergy; and the power of chuſing their paſtors and biſhops, a right equally deducible from equity, hiſtory, reaſon, and the ſcriptures, taken from the laity, and ſhared between the hierarchy and the civil power. And this ſyſtem of practice

and belief, ſo groſsly adulterated, ſo totally unlike the original, is called Chriſtianity, and enforced by racks, and flames, and gibbets; the antient ſupporters of civil, and now the welcome auxiliaries of eccleſiaſtical power. What may we ſuppoſe would have been the ſtate of chriſtianity at the preſent hour, had not the daring and original genius of Luther reduced it ſomething nearer to its original principles, in the ſixteenth century? What may we ſuppoſe will be its ſtate in the twentieth, ſhould no new Luther ariſe to teach our clergy the diſtance between the houſe of the Lord and the courts of princes, the difference between the ſervice of God and mammon?

But I foreſee that ſome of my readers may here exclaim, All this may be true, but what is it to the purpoſe? You are writing upon government and political liberty, why then deviate to the abuſes and corruptions of chriſtianity?—Becauſe the hiſtory of chriſtianity, a perfect and recorded ſucceſſion of facts, which every man may conſider at his leiſure, is the beſt illuſtration in the univerſe of the ſubject on which I am writing. Becauſe, if neither the immediate doctrines of Heaven itſelf, nor its poſitive commands, have been able to preſerve even a chriſtian clergy from every corruption which can grow upon the ſelfiſh paſſions, what are we to expect will be the

fate

fate of inſtitutions merely human, if once abandoned to the avarice, ambition, and indolence of thoſe who have an equal intereſt to pervert them?

While, therefore, I plead the cauſe of truth, and defend the intereſt of the human ſpecies, the wider my range, the more extenſive my obſervations, the greater will be the force of thoſe concluſions which I ſhall eſtabliſh upon the united evidence of ſpeculation, reaſon, and practical experience.

The favourers of a parliamentary reform have been repeatedly attacked with all the virulence of anonymous ſelfiſhneſs and malevolence. They are "idle ſpeculatiſts, nurſed in the gloom of ſolitude and ignorance," "men of deſpicable abilities," "of neither fortune or conſequence," "actuated by private intereſt and malevolence," and an hundred other characters equally liberal and candid.—If they indeed be all this, and the ſubſtance of a thouſand other invectives which have been laviſhed upon them, no doubt from the *pureſt motives*, they certainly deſerve the contempt of all their countrymen. But let the matter be brought fairly to iſſue before that public which is appealed to. MARIUS is the laſt and meaneſt of that body. Should he be foiled, an hundred abler champions are ready to enter the field, and the cauſe which he maintains will receive no diſ-

grace

diſgrace from the weakneſs of its defender. But, ſhould the arguments which he adduces remain unconfuted, what will the public think of the courage of his adverſaries, or of the juſtice of their cauſe?

" Each fearleſs hero dares an hundred foes,
" While the feaſt laſts, and while the goblet flows;
" But who to meet one martial man is found,
" When the fight rages, and the flames ſurround?"

POPE'S ILIAD.

Some of theſe gentlemen are famous for their metaphyſical acuteneſs. Let them therefore deſcend into the field, and prove the falſity of the principles which I have laid down. If they can be confuted, it will ſave me the trouble of proceeding in my courſe, and proſecuting an enquiry commenced under ſuch inauſpicious omens. Or, as they ſometimes affect to deſpiſe ſpeculation, and ſeem to imagine that all the underſtanding of the world is comprized in the dull routine of parliamentary buſineſs and oppoſition dinners, let them diſprove this practical maxim upon which I reſt the merits of the cauſe, " That there is no inſtance of any body of men which have not abuſed whatever truſts were repoſed in them, to the vileſt purpoſes of ſelfiſhneſs, the inſtant they were not acted upon by ſome external force which kept them true to the purpoſes of their inſtitution."

Should

Should theſe points either not be denied, or being denied ſhould not be adequately diſproved by argument, I will take the liberty of ſtating the manner in which I intend to apply my principles, and the concluſion I ſhall attempt to eſtabliſh.

In the firſt place, it is my opinion, as has been repeatedly affirmed by a majority of the nation, that the preſent Houſe of Commons is no repreſentation of the Engliſh people.

And this, I imagine, will be the more eaſily conceived even by my adverſaries, as many of them, rather than grant the force of any argument in favour of public liberty, have choſen to deny that repreſentation was any part of the Engliſh conſtitution.

In the ſecond place, I aſſert, that, if the preſent Houſe of Commons does not really repreſent the people, the people have no conſtitutional method of either effectually enforcing or oppoſing public meaſures.

In the third place, I will take the liberty of examining the conduct of thoſe who are called the repreſentatives of the people, particularly in reſpect to the celebrated Eaſt-India buſineſs.

And ſhould I ſucceed in eſtabliſhing the principles which I have here advanced, I ſhall ſubmit it to the underſtanding of my countrymen, whether, while they are ſo tremblingly alive to the rights of

ſovereigns

ſovereigns and miniſters, it does not become them to have ſome regard for their own.

I have addreſſed theſe letters to you, ſir, becauſe I think the eſteem and gratitude of the public conſtitute the fit reward of virtuous actions. No one has exerted himſelf more ſtrenuouſly, more diſintereſtedly, more uniformly. While Mr. —— appeared the champion of the people and their rights, you reverenced him with a zeal which I never thought his conduct deſerved. But it is the cleareſt proof of your own integrity, that you have been able to relinquiſh thoſe habitual deluſions the inſtant you could be convinced they were miſplaced. In reſpect to the reſolutions brought forward at the laſt meeting of the quintuple alliance, I am convinced, they contain dangerous and ſalutary truths, little likely to be adopted by the indolence of this nation, but neceſſary to influence their conduct, if they aſpire to continue a free people. To place this ſubject in the cleareſt light, and to bring it home to the hearts and underſtandings of my countrymen, is the only aim of

MARIUS.

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LETTER IV.

TO THE

Right Honourable the EARL of STAIR.

My LORD,

THERE is an ambition in the human mind, which may at leaſt be pardoned, if not commended, of connecting itſelf with every object of public eſteem. Poets have exhauſted the compariſon of the oak and ivy, and your lordſhip is too well acquainted with poetry as well as calculation, to need a reference to the particular paſſages. I am contented for once to be the ſubject of the alluſion, and to have it ſuppoſed that MARIUS would riſe to notice upon the blaſts which ſpread your lordſhip's fame.

In your laſt pamphlet, you expreſs a wiſh that the euthanaſia of the Engliſh conſtitution may be a mild deſpotiſm. Had ſuch a ſentiment proceeded from any of the common reptiles that are engendered in the corruptions of a court, we ſhould have only ſaid, "The crea-

ture's at his dirty work again," and paſſed it over in ſilent contempt: but when it proceeds from a man, who, apparently retired from human affairs, ſhrouds himſelf in his own integrity, and delivers oracular ſayings from the precincts of conſecrated groves, we ſurely muſt be as much aſtoniſhed as the frighted heathen, that heard treachery recommended from the tripod of Apollo.

The public, my lord, have given you undoubted credit for the apparent zeal with which you oppoſed the American war. Conſidering the prejudices of your country, they allowed it to be no trifling effort. They even pardoned ſome little advances towards Lord North *, in conſideration of the ſpirit with which you abuſed the majority of the parliament and the reſt of the adminiſtration. But this was nothing more than had been already done by many of the moſt diſtinguiſhed characters in the nation; nor can

* "The noble lord has much in poſſeſſion, more in reverſion: happy in his family, happy in his fortune and abilities, with ſtrong natural and ſocial affections, no one muſt drink deeper of the bitter cup of national humiliation and ruin. In his public line of conduct I ſee, or fancy that I ſee, and in his alone, of all the ruthleſs miniſterial tribe, ſome twitches of remorſe, ſome

can we therefore allow you the full merit of your modeſt inſinuation: "It is the comfort, it is the glory of my life to have oppoſed, almoſt ſingly, in the beginning, that war, at the ſure conſequence and expence of all that has happened to me*."

Was your lordſhip ignorant, when you hazarded that aſſertion, that the American war had been openly oppoſed, not only by a conſiderable party in parliament, but by a numerous body of independent men in every quarter of the kingdom? That petitions had been ſent from many of the trading towns and the counties of South Britain?

The miniſterial writers of that ill-omened hour are full of menaces againſt the factious party at home that juſtified the reſiſtance of the Americans. They firſt, we are told, lighted up the flame of rebellion; they afterwards gave new force to its half-extinguiſhed violence; they dictated the reſolutions of congreſs, the march of Waſhing-

ſome recollections of the fair feelings of humanity, ſome ſweet drops of the milk of human kindneſs."

FACTS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES, p. 26.

I heard it obſerved, when this paſſage was firſt publiſhed, that his lordſhip muſt have ſeen all this by ſecond ſight; for not an Engliſhman could ever diſcover the leaſt of all theſe wonders.

* An argument to prove, that it is the indiſpenſable Duty, &c. by John, Earl of Stair, p. 24.

ton, the independence of America, and the eternal humiliation of their own country:

"They hated, they deſpis'd, and they deſtroy."

Does your lordſhip ſeriouſly believe that all this ſeries of accuſations relates to you alone? That you were the only object of miniſterial hatred, of party rancour, of American gratitude? Or have you never yet heard the names of Richmond, Chatham, Camden, and even of Dr. Price?

"Me, me! adſum qui feci, in me convertite ferrum."

But, if you inveſt yourſelf with this pre-eminence, you ſhould at leaſt have fitted yourſelf to ſupport with dignity the part you voluntarily aſſume. We can conceive Cato tearing out his own bowels, or Brutus, with his laſt breath, complaining that heaven had abandoned the cauſe of virtue; but we cannot ſo eaſily conceive the laſt of Romans carrying up an addreſs to welcome the conqueror from the plains of Pharſalia, and congratulating his triumphs over the conſtitution.

But this inſinuation may perhaps be controverted by your lordſhip's friends: let us try how far it can be brought home from the evidence of your own writings. He that never omits

omits an opportunity of caſting contempt and ridicule upon every expedient, one alone excepted, may fairly be imagined to think more highly of that exception, and to prefer it to all the reſt. Intereſt, as well as vanity, may find out more paths than one of arriving at its ends; and he is little acquainted with the world, who is ignorant that to degrade an enemy is often the ſame thing as to recommend a friend.

You have taken every opportunity, in the different tracts you have publiſhed, of expreſſing your contempt of all public characters, and of a great majority of the Houſe of Commons. Let us hear your own words: "The happy counterpoiſe of the different parts of our conſtitution is deſtroyed; all reſponſibility is made a jeſt; for, backed by a majority, paid to ſupport, and paid to applaud their meaſures, be they what they may, miniſters gather the roſes without the cares or the thorns of power; and from the number and rank, and even fortunes of the corrupted, faſhion and ton is given to the baſeſt proſtitutions of principles and of talents*."— Again: "Was indeed, as in the days of our anceſtors, the fable believed, of a bargain and ſale to the Devil for temporary honours and

* Facts and their Conſequences, p. 25.

emoluments,

emoluments, I much fear that the *prince of darkneſs* would hold a majority in the Britiſh parliament †."—I have ſelected theſe from a variety of paſſages equally ſtrong and pointed, becauſe I think they muſt be allowed to convey a very unequivocal idea of your ſentiments. But if miniſters, if even parliaments, are ſo radically corrupted, it can be neither from miniſters nor parliaments, ſuch as they are at preſent, that the nation is to expect its ſafety. Whereever the prince of darkneſs may obtain a majority, I will anſwer for it he will never want a ſubſtitute to manage affairs in his behalf.

One only alternative therefore remains, unleſs the nation ought to be entirely paſſive under ſuch a complicated weight of injuries and calamities: it may inſiſt upon reforming the corruptions of its repreſentatives, or it may conſent to aboliſh repreſentation altogether, and take ſhelter in what you feelingly call "a mild deſpotiſm."—Should the few remaining friends of their country's liberties, for ſuch friends *may* even now remain, adopt the former part of the alternative, it appears to me no reflection upon their *hearts*, and but little upon their *heads*.

† Attempt to balance the Income and Expenditure of the State, p. 18.

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The bounds of poſſibility are little known to the ordinary part of mankind. The few ſuperior minds that have enlarged them for the ſpecies, were looked upon at firſt as raſh adventurers, who were only accelerating their own deſtruction. If the opinions of mankind are forcibly altered by ſucceſs, it ariſes, I fear, leſs from juſtice than from vanity and meanneſs. They are willing to derive benefit from the labours and dangers which they began with decrying, and would eſtabliſh the merit of having foreſeen thoſe diſcoveries which they have gravely pronounced impoſſible.

As to moral cauſes and their effects, they are a perpetual contradiction to the boaſted powers of penetration. The wiſeſt man in general ſees but little before him, and frequently not at all. The objects are ſometimes ſo dark, that it is impoſſible to diſtinguiſh them; ſometimes ſo luminous, that they dazzle the obſerver's eye; and paſſion, prejudice, and ſuperſtition, are perpetually buſy to change their colouring and alter their dimenſions. If your lordſhip foreſaw the independence of the Americans, when the Britiſh parliament as wantonly as fooliſhly choſe to drive them to extremities, was every man even of ſenſe endowed with equal penetration?—Many, I believe, as quick-ſighted as yourſelf, and as much

much the friends of univerſal liberty, trembled for the event. They did not indeed doubt that America would be ſevered in the end from the mother country, but they could not ſo eaſily calculate what might be the immediate effects of the almoſt unparalleled forces which this country employed againſt it. Neither could they foreſee that happy ſeries of blunders and abſurdity which marked the operations of the Britiſh Miniſtry, and which contributed, at leaſt as much as arms, to bring the affair ſo ſpeedily to a deciſion. They knew they had much to expect from the genius of Lord - - - - - ; but they did not exactly comprehend the full extent of his abilities. That wiſe procraſtination of events in their own nature inevitable ; that judicious mixture of precipitance and delay, of firmneſs and pliability ; ſo conſtantly miſapplied that it is ſcarcely poſſible to attribute it wholly to the common principles of miniſterial dulneſs ; that lethargy that ſlumbered over every opportunity ; that activity which never failed to ſucceed its irremediable loſs ; that plauſibility which never deceived, and that fortitude which never impoſed ; were happy ſtrokes of the ſublime in his lordſhip's character, which required a full ſeries of ſeven years to develop to the public.

Pardon me, my lord, a digreſſion which the con-

conſideration of ſuch unequalled merit draws from my unwilling pen. The noble character which I have been deſcribing, has done much for politicians and hiſtorians, and he deſerves all that they can beſtow.

But if the proſpect of diſtant events is in its own nature ſo obſcure as generally to elude or dazzle the ſtrongeſt ſight, is it from the avowed friends of liberty that we are to expect every degree of ridicule and imputation upon thoſe who dedicate their lives to its preſervation?—The preſent, it is too generally known, is no common or trifling æra. A great and mighty nation, ſhaken by ſucceſſive ſtrokes, totters upon its foundations. The nobleſt conſtitution in the world "is ſquirted to death by Eton boys." "Parliament, to which it is natural to have recourſe in times of difficulty and danger, is, I fear, fallen too much into the public contempt to be of any material ſervice. It is, I doubt, too generally looked upon as a body of men without any fixed principles of right and wrong; a weathercock, that obeys each blaſt of court or popular favour, which ever of them is uppermoſt *." The inevitable concluſion that follows from the premiſes laid

* Argument to prove, &c. by John, Earl of Stair, p. 33.

down by the greateſt calculator in the nation, is, "*That the ſtate is a bankrupt, and that thoſe who have truſted their all to the public faith, are in very imminent danger of becoming (I die pronouncing it) beggars* †." It is true, indeed, your lordſhip adds, if nothing effectual is done to prevent theſe conſequences. But whence is this *ſomething effectual* to ariſe? You have already decried all parties, and have deſcribed the wiſdom and virtue of parliament too exactly to induce us to expect it from that honorable houſe. Nothing, therefore, remains, but the euthanaſia of the conſtitution, towards which you ſeem to caſt a longing eye; the mild deſpotiſm which has eſcaped your pen, that is to indemnify us for all our loſſes, extend the preſent *narrow* bounds of public credit, and prepare us for new wars, with all their baneful attendants.

Were I inclined to imitate your lordſhip's candour, I might pronounce all this, as you do of the wiſhes and exertions of the people, "moſtly impracticable nonſenſe." But I reſpect your lordſhip more than you ſeem to do the ſincereſt friends of their country. In ſuch a ſtate of things, we can no longer be called upon

† Argument to prove, &c. p. 32.

to

to content ourſelves with the common beaten tracts of political corruption and miniſterial cunning. Even the advocates of arbitrary power, ſince they have abandoned their jus divinum and hereditary right in favour of the houſe of Hanover, and even your countrymen, ſince they have transferred their attachment from the name of Stuart to that of Brunſwick, make protection and obedience inſeparable terms. In the preſent ſtate of things, we ſeem to be almoſt as much abandoned by our governors, as we formerly were by the Romans, to our own internal ſtrength. The land-marks of the conſtitution are all removed, and, were we as ſlaviſhly inclined as the antient Cappadocians, who deſired a king becauſe they could not conceive the poſſibility of governing themſelves, we know not how to obey, becauſe it is not determined who is to command. Your lordſhip, indeed, comes forward with a charitable zeal, and offers us a tyrant. This, perhaps it may he obſerved, is no new preſent from your country; but almoſt a century of civil conteſts and deſolations, of private miſeries and public executions, of controverted titles, and the laſt extremes alternately dared and ſuffered by a noble nation, have made us rather cautious how we accept the boon. Let us, in the mean time, try what

can be effected by methods more adapted to the genius and ſpirit of the Engliſh people. No nation was ever deſerted by heaven or fortune till it was firſt deſerted by itſelf; and the annals of our hiſtory may lead us to hope that we are never nearer to our deliverance than when a feeble mind ſees nothing around but horror and deſpair.

MARIUS.

LET-

LETTER V.

TO THE

Right Honourable the EARL of STAIR.

My LORD,

HE that diſintereſtedly dedicates his life to the public ſervice, if ſuch a character can be allowed to exiſt, is, unleſs virtue be thought its own reward, more to be pitied than every other deſcription of men. In the courſe of his labours, he will be obliged ſucceſſively to attack, if not to join, every party of the great and powerful; and as the malice has always been allowed to exceed the gratitude of our fellow-creatures, he will have much more to expect from the revenge of thoſe he quits, than from the patronage of thoſe with whom he leagues.

Were a prudent man, therefore, to form a ſilent and reflected ſcheme of making his for-

tune

tune by the public, he would naturally attach himſelf to one of the reigning parties into which this miſerable country is divided. It matters not whether the engagement be formed in the hour of triumph or diſgrace. Succeſs naturally expands the heart; and defeat has a wonderful tendency to increaſe the powers of ſenſibility. A routed faction is never ſqueamiſhly nice in admitting friends, or a victorious one in converting enemies. What wonders have we not already ſeen performed during the adminiſtration of Lord North! What additional miracles ſtill attend him in his diſgrace!

There are, my lord, who have imagined you compoſed of ſuch ſtubborn materials as reſiſt all the alchymy of modern ſtateſmen. The liberal, the merited abuſe you have ſo repeatedly heaped upon miniſters and parliaments, ſeemed to point you out as one of the few unvitrifiable ſubſtances which no political flux could mollify. But I have attended, with that prudent jealouſy which ever accompanies a long experience of mankind, to the progreſs of your political career. I have diſcovered, or fancied that I diſcovered, "a method in your madneſs;" a prudence which rarely accompanies violent paſſions, but which has never failed to temper the ebullitions

litions of your zeal. When in the midſt of all your reſentment of public wrongs, and even in the more ſincere complaint of private injuries, I obſerved that caution which always diſtinguiſhed accurately between the ſovereign and the miniſter, I began to think it poſſible, that all theſe blunt profeſſions of rugged honeſty might mean as little as the tropes and figures of the oppoſition. Nothing can be more illiberal than national reflections. I admire the induſtry, the ingenuity, the bravery of your countrymen; but I ſuſpect their patriotiſm. Rochefaucault obſerves that the character of every country is as indelibly ſtamped upon the manners of the individual, as its accent is upon his pronunciation. Will your lordſhip pretend to conſtitute the exception?

I anticipate what may be alleged in your defence. It will be obſerved that duty to the ſovereign was never yet reputed treaſon againſt the conſtitution. All the ſcurrilities which diſgrace the preſs will be produced, from the invectives of the North Briton down to the pointed malevolence of Junius. But is there no medium between the ruffian and the paraſite? Can your lordſhip conceive no modification of the Engliſh language which does not ter-

terminate either in licentious abuſe, or intereſted flattery?

This nation has been too repeatedly deceived not to preſerve an active jealouſy. We view the lion's den, and we are obliged to exclaim with the fox in the fable, "Veſtigia nulla retror-" ſum." Not every one that comes to us in the name of the conſtitution, can be now admitted to the rank and conſequence of a patriot. It is one of the characteriſtics of the latter times, that there ſhall ariſe falſe prophets, and falſe teachers, that ſhall deceive even the elect. Since, therefore, you have as yet produced no miracles, nor even pretended to the power of working them, we muſt try your ſpirit, not by the marvels you perform, but by the doctrines you preach.

There is, my lord, a certain ſpecies of profeſſion, a faſhionable cant, which is with juſtice ſuſpected by every diſcerning mind. It has been one of the greateſt misfortunes of the preſent reign, that ſtrong profeſſions of loyalty and perſonal attachment have always prevailed over every other ſpecies of political merit. The obſervation is ſtale, but it is true, that kings are forbidden by nature to have a friend. Is it their bleſſing, or their curſe, that they are ſeldom acquainted

acquainted with this great truth, till it is too late to profit by the diſcovery?

The real and diſintereſted friend of his country is indeed loyal, but it is loyalty of another ſtamp which he profeſſes, and which is the principle of his actions. His allegiance to the prince is founded upon the conſideration that royalty is an eſſential part of that conſtitution which is the object of all his care and reverence. He conſiders not the perſon, but the office of the king. The one is frequently not more reſpectable than the meaneſt of his ſubjects, while the other is immortal and unchangeable. The reſpect, therefore, which he bears to the throne will never degenerate into any idolatry for the individual who is ſeated upon it. If he is ready to defend its juſt rights and prerogatives, it is becauſe thoſe rights and prerogatives conſtitute the Engliſh conſtitution; and that conſtitution, with all its defects, is more favourable to public happineſs and liberty, than any other which could be adopted. In office, he will treat his ſovereign with reſpect, and perform his orders with alacrity and zeal; ſo long as thoſe orders contribute to the public benefit, and are conſiſtent with public liberty. He will endeavour to preſerve unſullied the nobleſt of the royal prerogatives, the power of pro-

moting merit and rewarding virtue. Far from him that abject ſpirit of monopolization, which ſeizes upon royal favour, as it would do a private patrimony, and proſtitutes it to family connections and party leagues. Far from him that ſervile ſpirit of flattery, which confounds the office of miniſter and laureate, and degrades the ruler of a powerful nation into the obſequiouſneſs of a court buffoon. He will endeavour to make the ſovereign worthy of the nobleſt panegyrics; but he will teach him to expect them not from the corrupt echoes of a court, but from the unbiaſſed acclamations of a grateful people.

Alike undaunted amid the tempeſts of popular clamour and factious oppoſition, he will keep his eye fixed upon that ſacred mean which conſtitutes the ſecurity of ſovereign and people. Should there be a meaſure which his ſuperior genius points out as neceſſary to the public ſafety, he will boldly adopt it; deſpiſing alike the arts of deſigning men, and the empty prejudices of a multitude. He will truſt to the uniform integrity of his own conduct for a vindication; and to time, which as neceſſarily eſtabliſhes the ſolid fabrics of truth as it ſweeps away the empty ſyſtems of falſehood. His fame, he knows, is not the tranſitory beam of either

royal

royal or popular favour; it is the result of a whole series of consistent actions directed to one great end, and proceeding from one common principle.

That principle may teach him to oppose the encroachments of faction upon the royal prerogative; but it will teach him to oppose, with ten-fold zeal, those temporary paroxysms of delirium which tempt a deluded people to lay their privileges at a master's feet. In the first case, they may indeed endanger all, by grasping at too much; but in the second they give up all, even without the hope of an equivalent. Is the sovereign virtuous? He will be the last either to persuade or to accept the sacrifice. Is he possessed with the common rage of encreasing his power? That day which yields the constitution up to his discretion, renders him a tyrant, and destroys the nation.

In what language, therefore, would such a man address the first magistrate of his country, were it necessary to approach the throne? With respect and modesty, but with firmness; with reverence, but with truth. He would leave the interested professions of personal attachment and veneration to those who meant to betray the people by flattering the sovereign, or to expose the sovereign himself by soothing the common

prejudices of his ſtation. Should he ſee the nation almoſt undone by a diſaſtrous war, in which a favourite and protected adminiſtration had borne a principal ſhare, he would not make his commiſeration of injured royalty the capital figure of the piece. Well knowing that the ſovereign and his family are always the laſt to feel the weight of public miſery, he would reſerve his pity for the thouſand innocent objects which deſerve it better. Could he weep tears more faſt or precious "than the Arabian tree", there would not be one to beſtow on every victim of ſuch a war as the American has produced. If he is feelingly alive to the temporary embarraſſment of a *royal hart* held for a moment at bay, what muſt he feel for whole provinces that have been for ſeven years the prey of the bloodieſt hunters that ever followed the chace of death? What muſt he feel for a thouſand gallant veterans that line our ſtreets, deform our public ways, and preſent in vain their wounds, their poverty, their incurable diſeaſes, to thoſe in whoſe pernicious cauſe they have contracted them? What muſt he feel for a nation like the Engliſh, which is, with all its faults, one of the moſt gallant, generous, and deſerving in the univerſe, reduced to univerſal beggary by a conteſt which never was national, in a diſpute which never intereſted the public?

The

The royal children, my lord, have never yet wanted bread *, and Heaven forbid they ſhould ever incur that neceſſity! They live in the midſt of a nation that is ſufficiently diſpoſed to ſhare its own laſt morſels with its rulers. But perhaps it might be more diſcreet in a loyal ſubject, to keep the hydra debts of the civil liſt, that "bougeon" ſo repeatedly, though lopped and feared ſo often, and the neceſſity of incurring new expences, from the public view. Even Lord A——n's declaration in favour of a *manly and ſpirited prince* has met with few admirers. Accuſtomed as we are to bear, with a degrading patience, the vices and follies of our rulers, we have not yet learned to believe that they add more to the glory than to the happineſs of the people; and in our preſent circumſtances, we ſhould willingly exchange the luſtre of ſuch a triumph for the more ſober advantages of order and œconomy.

MARIUS.

* "The king is forced to take the very bread from his children's mouths." Argument to prove, &c. p. 12.

LET-

LETTER VI.

TO THE

Right Honourable the EARL of SHELBURNE.

My LORD,

IF praiſe be ever agreeable to a delicate taſte, it is when it aſcends pure and unſuſpected; ſuch an offering as an honeſt mind may beſtow, and a generous one accept without a bluſh. This is what your lordſhip has been little accuſtomed to receive during the ſhort period of your political triumphs, and what you are too well acquainted with the world to expect during your diſgrace. But,

> "When intereſt calls off all her ſneaking train,
> "And all the oblig'd deſert and all the vain;"

then is the hour for the impartial man to come forward, and declare his ſentiments. Nor can you be more ſurpriſed at this addreſs, which you certainly have never paid for, than I am, to find a ſingle action in a miniſter worthy of unbought applauſe. But it appears to me an unpardonable weakneſs to be more afraid of commending

mending merit than of cenſuring vice. I therefore ſeize the moment, when I find myſelf able to approve the conduct of a miniſter, leſt it ſhould not return.

When, in the beginning of the year 1782, we beheld the diſſolution of Lord North's adminiſtration, you have not forgotten the general triumphs of the nation. It was not only the capricious love of novelty, however univerſal may be the principle; it was the involuntary intoxication of a whole people, that, wearied with its miſeries, expected ſome relief from a change of maſters. Beſides, the very nature of the circumſtances had created in the nation an unuſual diſpoſition for confidence. The ſpirit of oppoſition had raged ſo long in vain, that it had drawn the bonds of political union tighter than common between the multitude and their leaders. With whatever contempt the illuſtrious characters that compoſe the Houſe of Commons are accuſtomed to treat their conſtituents, a variety of cauſes had concurred to produce a temporary relaxation.

The reigning faction could not be ignorant that it was dangerous to reduce even ſlaves to deſperation; and a ten years bitter abſtinence from all the ſweets of power and emolument had taught their opponents the neceſſity of condeſcending to cajole the people. Hence aroſe

thoſe

thoſe meetings and aſſociations throughout England; popular dinners and popular harangues; fervent profeſſions and unſubſtantial promiſes; with all the train of amorous lies and perjuries, by which our unſucceſsful ſtateſmen are accuſtomed to enſnare a fond, believing multitude. And ſo thoroughly were they deceived, that they had entirely forgotten that almoſt invariable law of nature, by which a miniſter is compelled to contradict all that he had ever promiſed when out of place. They perhaps imagined that ſomething was to be expected from the unparalleled extremities to which the whole nation was reduced. They thought that a rational ſelf-intereſt might for once ſupply the place of virtue, and convince their friends of the utility of preſerving ſome appearance of honour and conſiſtency. Men that were obtruded againſt the conſent of the ſovereign might perceive the importance of cultivating the eſteem of the people. There was too a ſort of religious ſanctity attached to the remembrance of common dangers and the ties which they had produced. The pilfering Arab, although inured to ſpoil and carnage, will ſpare the wretch that has once claimed the hoſpitality of his roof: and who could tell but Engliſh patriots might ſo far adopt the example, as for once to *ſpare their friends?*

But

But there is a ſublimity which diſtinguiſhes certain minds, although it muſt ever eſcape the conceptions of the vulgar. Doomed to the uniformity of private life, they find it difficult to conceive what is placed beyond the reach of common experience. They have indeed a groſs and confuſed ſuſpicion that the inflexible patriot may be gradually ſoftened into the cringing courtier, or the rapacious miniſter; and that the warmeſt advocates for liberty may at length incline to the ſolid bleſſings of arbitrary power. But theſe changes they imagine will be the effect of time and ſolicitation. They look for the common formalities of gradual corruption, and think it hardly poſſible that their warmeſt friends ſhould become their moſt determined enemies, without paſſing through the medium of neglect and indifference.

But theſe are prejudices which are now happily removed for ever; and I will venture to aſſert that the greateſt maſter of political verſatility will find it difficult hereafter to attract applauſe or ſurprize an audience. Proteus himſelf, were he now to viſit our iſland, muſt own himſelf outdone, even at his own weapons, and confeſs the ſuperiority of ſome of our modern practitioners. Although a god, there were certain ties which could hold him faſt, and at

length compel him to aſſume his own, after he had run through every other ſhape. What would he have ſaid to mere mortals, who eſcape from every tie and put off every character at will?

But, my lord, I am wandering wide of the intended mark. The taſk which I have propoſed to myſelf is that of collecting facts, and preſenting ſober reaſon to my countrymen; and I haſten to fulfil it. However eager, however general were the expectations of the people at the change of miniſters which took place in the ſpring of 1782, they were moſt bitterly diſappointed. The unfortunate death of the Marquis of Rockingham, which ſo ſpeedily enſued, was the ſignal for breaking up that adminiſtration, which twenty years had ſcarcely matured, and from which the nation expected its deliverance. I, indeed, had not been one of that ſanguine body. Perhaps my dulneſs or malevolence rendered me leſs clear-ſighted in reſpect to the expected bleſſings. My acquaintance with general hiſtory, as well as my experience of mankind, had taught me to believe too generally perhaps of public men, that, whatever might be their profeſſions, their aim was nothing but ſelf-intereſt. I was not ſo partial to the ſpirit of the age as to believe it very prolific in ſuperior characters.

characters. When I conſidered the formal profeſſions and the apparent ſtrength and diſcipline of our parties, they might appear ſufficiently formidable; but when, after the example of Ageſilaus*, I ſeparated them into their reſpective claſſes, I found the number of genuine patriots ſurprizingly diminiſhed. I did not therefore expect to ſee the golden days, of which ſo many dreamed, renewed or realized, even under a genuine Whig adminiſtration; which had been the Panacea ſo induſtriouſly held forth for every national diſeaſe. But I muſt confeſs I expected more from the good

* When Ageſilaus commanded the allied army of the Grecians in an expedition into Aſia, he was reproached for the ſmall comparative number of Spartans which he had brought with him. He, therefore, took an opportunity, at a general review, of proclaiming that all who practiſed the trade of carpenters ſhould leave their arms, and go to a particular ſpot. Many of the allies, who had been brought up to that trade, accordingly quitted the ranks, but not a ſingle Spartan. In this manner he went through every mechanical trade, till the ranks of the allies were almoſt reduced to nothing, while thoſe of the Spartans had ſuffered no diminution. "See now," ſaid he, to thoſe who had before murmured, "on which ſide the balance preponderates: you bring into the field a numerous band of tradeſmen and mechanics; but it is Sparta alone that furniſhes ſoldiers."—Probably the author was conſidering the effect which would be produced upon a certain honorable houſe by a ſimilar proclamation.

ſenſe and abilities of thoſe gentlemen than has been yet performed. I, indeed, foreſaw that all the boaſted ſchemes of reformation would end in appropriating the honours and emoluments of the ſtate to themſelves and their creatures; but I thought ſomething might have been done for the nation in points where the immediate intereſt of miniſters was not concerned. I imagined the firſt object of a ſet of men, who came into power upon the expreſs condition of reſtoring peace, would be to realize the expectations of the public in that particular. I thought too ſomething might be done to heal the wounds which war had made, and to regain the commercial confidence of the Americans; not by ſacrificing the intereſt or honour of the nation, but by a rational conſideration of what its neceſſities required *. In reſpect to the additional burthens which every diſcerning man knew muſt be impoſed, I thought that ſome regard might be ſhewn to commerce, to policy, and even to the inclinations of a people that had already borne ſo much, and with ſuch unparalleled patience.

* This ſubject has been lately moſt ſenſibly and forcibly treated in a pamphlet, by Brian Edwards, Eſq.

But,

But, it ſeems, theſe expectations, moderate as they may appear, were doomed to be diſappointed in a manner which it was impoſſible to foreſee. The premature death of the Marquis of Rockingham broke down the iſthmus which ſeparated the hoſtile factions of the cabinet, and let in the contending tides. I was moſt ſincerely grieved for that premature death, and lamented it perhaps as truly, though not as indiſcreetly, as ſome of his friends. I did not indeed attribute any very extenſive range to the political abilities of the noble perſonage, and I always dreaded the faſcinations of party; but he appeared to be a man of amiable and unblemiſhed manners, a promoter of agriculture and induſtry, and a ſincere friend to what he conceived to be the real intereſts of his country. Above all, fortune had made him the central point which ſupported a mighty arch; an arch indeed more deſtined to record the triumphs of a party than the happineſs or liberty of a nation; but ſuch an one as could not be then deſtroyed, without threatening to involve both in the wide compaſs of its ruin.

I know not what were the exact feelings of the nation, when they firſt heard of that fatal and irreparable breach in the cabinet, but I will take the liberty of deſcribing my own. Whatever

ever credit I might give to the underſtandings of the two honorable gentlemen who ſet the example of reſignation, I did not think that conduct afforded a very favourable ſpecimen of either their heads or hearts. I could not conceive that a real friend to any intereſt of his country would take that opportunity of wreaking his perſonal ſpite, at the expence of the public. Unamimity I had heard echoed, at every public meeting, by every ſubaltern of the party, till I was ſickened with the ſound. Was it then a time, in ſuch an awful moment of national criſis and danger, to perplex the public councils with the low intereſts and cabals of faction, at the expence of that very unanimity which had till then been the *word* of the whole party? The public at large can ſcarcely pretend to decide the paltry quarrels of courts and cabinets; but they felt, that if there was ever an hour when an honeſt man would have conceded ſomething for the general good, it was the preſent; and they cared not who was prime miniſter, provided he gave them peace.

I am almoſt afraid your lordſhip will hardly excuſe the ſtyle of even this panegyric: if you do not, I can eaſily conceive in what manner it will be received by others. But this is the language of truth; and theſe are the ſenti-

ments

ments of every independent man throughout the kingdom with whom I have converſed.

But when the ſeſſion was opened with that memorable ſpeech which has been ſo much the ſubject of altercation, I could not help feeling ſomething like ſurprize at the manner in which it was received. Had the lower houſe been peopled indeed with inveterate republicans, I ſhould have been leſs ſurprized at the ſpirit which guided thoſe memorable debates: but when I ſaw thoſe very gentlemen, who had ſo lately given ſpecimens of their extraordinary talents for abject flattery, dealing out the moſt unmannerly invectives, I could not help bluſhing for human nature and my country.

In ſpite, however, of virulence, ſcurrility, and oppoſition, the peace was ratified by the ſame honorable gentlemen whoſe conſciences would not ſuffer them to approve it. Common minds, indeed, did not comprehend the full force of thoſe ſubtle diſtinctions. They thought that if the peace was pernicious and diſhonorable, it merited the public oppoſition of the houſe. They thought it as much an object of parliamentary interference, as the nomination of a new miniſter, the firſt, and moſt undoubted prerogative of the crown. The nomination of

an

an improper miniſter may be indeed eventually deſtructive to a nation; but it is not a meaſure which requires ſuch immediate interference. A virtuous and independent houſe of commons, like the preſent, may always arreſt him in his career; they always poſſeſs the dreadful artillery of impeachments, of which they have made ſo liberal an uſe during this whole century; they may at any time ſend forth their thunders, and hurl him flaming down. But an inadequate and diſhonorable peace may reduce the nation, in an inſtant, to ſuch extremities, as may render all future exertions vain.

But the peace was to be reprobated in order to diſplace the miniſter. There was even a peculiar advantage in making him the ſacrifice of the only ſalutary meaſure which this country has ſeen during the laſt twenty years. Even in the hour of triumph and exultation, no peace which is upon record has ever ſatisfied the expectations of the nation. How then was it poſſible that a peace, which was to ratify the eternal divorce of America, and which muſt therefore be attended with ſome humiliation to this country, could pleaſe the wild imaginations of the people; a people who had ſuffered enough to ſicken them with war, but not enough to make them ſubmit with

equanimity

equanimity to the disadvantages of their situation? It is the peculiar misery of human beings never to foresee inconveniences while they may be avoided, or to be able to bear them with patience when they are inevitable.

That the peace was the best which might have been obtained, it is impossible for me to decide. That it included the best terms your lordship was able to procure, may be sufficiently inferred, even from the principles of ambition and self-love: that any of your rivals would have been able to make a better, we have never had a more convincing proof than their own assertions. Such therefore as it is, the merit of it is entirely your own.

Whoever is moderately acquainted with human affairs, will continually lament the blindness both of princes and states. An useless tract of desert, a frozen ocean, a barren rock, may each in turn become the object of jealousy and ambition; may deluge the earth with blood, or cover the sea with carnage. But the solid advantages of peaceful industry, the perfection of internal government, and the improvement of agriculture, are objects that are either overlooked, or rarely suffered to incline the scale. Yet it would not be difficult to prove that there never has existed a nation, which would not

have been more benefited by applying its attention to theſe conſtant ſources of happineſs and population, than by a ſeries of the moſt ſplendid conqueſts. Yet war is ſometimes inevitable; a frantic prince, an ambitious miniſter, even a favoured paraſite, or ſtrumpet, may each alternately endanger the freedom and exiſtence of all the neighbouring ſtates. Every nation muſt therefore be prepared to defend by arms thoſe rights which may be attacked by arms; and when the conteſt is once begun, the ſoundeſt policy conſiſts in the moſt vigorous efforts. But when the diſpute does not relate either to national ſafety or independence, but to points of ideal power and ſpeculative ambition; to ſomething which flatters the pride more than it concerns the intereſt of a nation; above all, when it has originated in the ſpirit of error, and been carried on by that of deluſion, it cannot too ſoon receive its termination.

That this was the caſe with the American war, it would now be loſs of time to attempt to prove. As to the object of that conteſt, the miniſter that brought it on was continually ſhifting his ground; but, whatever was the pretext, it always implied the ſubjection of the colonies. When this too, like all the reſt, had deſerted him; when that ſubjection had been given up by

by every party as impracticable, the ſpirit of infatuation itſelf could ſcarcely invent a reaſon for continuing the war, the inſtant a tolerable peace was attainable. If there has been a ſet of men in this country ſufficiently blind, and adverſe to their country's intereſts, to attempt to continue it, your lordſhip will never bluſh to reckon them in the number of your enemies.

As to moſt of the reaſons which I have heard alleged, they diſgrace even the logic of the houſe of commons. So very contemptible and ſcanty were they, that even the unhappy loyaliſts have been dragged into the queſtion, by the very perſons that had ſo frequently repreſented them as the vile incendiaries of the war. That the ſituation of many of theſe unhappy men is truly pitiable I do not deny; that they deſerve well of the government, whatever they may do of the nation, is equally certain: but that it was neceſſary to carry on the war upon their account alone, I think the ſpirit of party itſelf will hardly venture to aſſert. If it was impracticable to conquer America for the Britiſh ſovereign, or the Britiſh parliament, did it ceaſe to be ſo, when attempted in the name of the loyaliſts? Or will any one dare to aſſert that any thing ſhort of conqueſt, could have forced the Americans to admit them to what they had loſt. If

therefore they wiſhed to be reſtored to their native country, it was evident that a ſingle year of peace would operate more in their favour, by abating the animoſity of their countrymen, than could have been effected by half a century of arms. If they only deſired a compenſation for their loſſes, the ſaving of a dozen or twenty millions in the national expenditure, would nearly have paid the bill, though it had been indorſed by all their friends in the oppoſition.

But what ſhall we reply to the heavier charges of national diſgrace, incurred by the ceſſion of a barren waſte, or a narrow iſland, to our enemies? Simply this, that public honour will always be better preſerved by augmenting the power, than by adding to the weakneſs of a nation. The relative ſtrength of every nation can never be long a ſecret to its neighbours; and the opinion which they entertain of this particular, will always be the meaſure of the reſpect which they ſhew, not the detail of paſt achievements, or the vain remembrance of a proweſs it can no longer boaſt. If this principle be true, it is evident, that great Britain, if doomed to loſe the colonies, became actually more formidable the inſtant a peace had taken place, than ſhe had been at any moment ſince the confederacy of ſo many nations againſt her.

The

The power of every ſtate is merely relative, and muſt be eſtimated not by any univerſal ſtandard, but by the comparative force of its neighbours. It is evident that during all the latter years of the war, however great might be the efforts of this country in themſelves, they were inadequate to the object propoſed: they were inadequate to the conqueſt of America; they were even inadequate to the defence of all our own poſſeſſions. But why were they inadequate? Merely for the ſame reaſon that Horatius was inferior to the united force of his three enemies, though ſingly more than a match for either. A confederacy had been formed againſt this country, ſuch as we have no precedent of in the annals of our hiſtory; ſuch as it will be our own fault, if we are doomed to encounter a ſecond time. Would it not have been reputed a maſter-ſtroke of policy to have been able to detach a ſingle member of that confederacy from the reſt, and to have decreaſed the ſuperiority of our enemies? Mr. Fox is ſaid to have tried the experiment with Holland, and your lordſhip with America: we have great reaſon to be thankful that both the attempts were abortive.

But, in giving us peace, you effected infinitely more than it was poſſible to do by any other means.

You

You broke to pieces, at a ſtroke, that vaſt coloſſus of a league which threatened to cruſh us with its weight, and ſcattered the fragments abroad to all the winds. You gave us time to repair the ruined ſtate of our finances by the admirable bills of reform which Mr. Burke has introduced; and to regain the friendſhip of America by the ſalutary proclamations of laſt July. And if the affairs of India had been as wiſely and equitably ſettled as they were intended by Mr. Fox's bill, ſome part of the glory muſt have been due to you, who prepared the way, by removing every obſtruction.

Where then is the loſs of national honour? If national honour conſiſt in ſuch a maſs of force as is ſingly ſuperior to all that can be brought againſt it, ſuch national honour never has yet exiſted. It did not exiſt even in the proudeſt times of the Roman commonwealth; ſince no one can doubt that the art of dividing enemies and poſtponing wars contributed, no leſs than arms, to the eſtabliſhment of their greatneſs. To look for it in the nicely-balanced ſyſtem of contrary forces which now compoſe the ſtate of Europe, would be the extreme of folly; ſince the very ſtability of that ſtate is confeſſedly owing to the power of oppoſing the ambition of one nation by the union of all the reſt. Why then ſhould the Engliſh people deſire

impoſſibilities,

impoſſibilities, which, even could they be realized, would end in their own deſtruction; ſince every human power, which becomes too mighty for reſiſtance, muſt neceſſarily produce every ſpecies of internal diſorder and corruption?

But whether they perſiſt in the purſuit of this chimerical greatneſs, or bound their wiſhes with the ſolid enjoyment of national happineſs and ſecurity, it is demonſtrable that peace was neceſſary for either object. A war, in which we were ſo evidently overmatched, and the continuance of which exhauſted our national reſources ſo faſt, without any adequate means of ſupply, could never have given us that decided ſuperiority which the ſucceſſes of Lord Chatham himſelf had failed to do. Peace therefore became neceſſary, were it only in the view of promoting the objects of our own ambition.

But the honour of a nation is not to be rated by the chimerical ſtandard of its being ſingly able to ſtand againſt the world in arms, or by a ruinous obſtinacy in purſuing impracticable projects. It is to be rated by the opinion of its wiſdom and juſtice, joined with ſuch a degree of power as renders it ſecure from every probable attack: and all theſe objects were more attainable by peace, than by the bloodieſt continuance of the

the war. Our wiſdom can never be impeached by putting an end to a ruinous conteſt which had no longer an object; our juſtice, by deſiſting from injuring the Americans and the Dutch; or our power, by ceaſing to laviſh our blood and treaſures as unprofitably as we had hitherto done.

And if we poſſeſſed ſufficient power to carry on the war for ſeveral future years, will any of thoſe reſources be diminiſhed by the peace? Will they not, on the contrary, be continually increaſing, unleſs our late infatuation is doomed to attend us to the laſt? By the equity and moderation of our public counſels we certainly may prevent the poſſibility of ſuch a league as we have lately eſcaped: and which of our neighbours will *ſingly* chuſe to encounter a nation that has been ſo nearly equal to all combined?

Theſe, my lord, are the reflections of an impartial man upon the peace which you have given us. In every point of view it riſes upon the underſtanding, and is brought home to our conviction. If the arguments I have uſed be juſt, they may tend to diminiſh the remaining prejudices of our countrymen, and to reſcue one action of a miniſter from the general infamy which awaits the tribe. If they be, on the contrary, falſe, and liable to be refuted, the malice of your enemies

is not ſo much aſſuaged, as to allow them any permanent triumphs. And while your lordſhip will eſcape the ridicule of employing ſo weak an advocate, I ſhall deſervedly engroſs the whole diſgrace of the undertaking, who,

"Nec Dîs, nec viribus, æquis,"

have engaged a volunteer in ſuch a cauſe.

MARIUS.

LETTER VII.

To Edmund Burke, Esq.

SIR,

IT is not without a diffidence proportioned to your great abilities and fame, that in the course of my labours I address myself to you.

> , . . . But if I must contend,
> Best with the best . . . more glory will be won,
> Or less be lost.—

And there is a passage in your own speech of the first of December last which emboldens me to the attempt, and makes me triumph over the consideration of my own inferiority. You observe, sir, "that nothing is to be found in any habits of life or education, which tends wholly to disqualify men for the functions of government, but that by which the power of exercising those functions is very frequently obtained; I mean a spirit of low cabal and intrigue, which I have never, in one instance, seen united with

with a capacity for ſound and manly policy*." If this, ſir, is any criterion, I can appeal to my own heart, and ſolemnly declare that I am as little connected with any cabal or intrigue, as any one in your own virtuous and independent majority; as little as yourſelf, Lord North, and Mr. Fox.

But before I begin to ſtate the obſervations with which I intend to trouble you, I will take the liberty of ſettling the limits within which our controverſy will be confined. I do not mean to expatiate in the wide field of accuſations which are brought againſt the Eaſt-India company: I cannot pretend to be prepared by "three years of laborious parliamentary reſearch," or armed with the artillery of ſecret committees; whoſe reports are now the unerring dictates of truth, though in the year 1781 they were "the curſed Pandora's box, whence ſprung out that dreadful calamity, the American war." Theſe laurels, ſir, are all your own; they have been dearly earned, and it would be equal temerity and injuſtice to diſturb you in their poſſeſſion. My labours will be of an humbler nature: they will be confined to thoſe points in which every citizen may with propriety pretend to form a judgment, the conduct of our repreſentatives,

* Mr. Burke's Speech on the firſt of December, 1783, p. 11, printed for Dodſley.

in meddling with the affairs of the Eaſt-India company, the virtue of the attempt, and the wiſdom of their proceedings.

A perſon ſo intimately acquainted with human life and literature, as I confeſs you to be, cannot be ignorant that it is one common art of every accuſer to excite the indignation of his audience, by every method within his power. When once their paſſions are thoroughly raiſed by a recital, whether real or fictitious, of crimes and horrors, it becomes eaſy to give the ſtorm whatever direction he wiſhes. Inſtead of being upon our guard againſt the ſuggeſtions of our heated imaginations, inſtead of ſcrutinizing the pretended evidence with a degree of doubt and accuracy proportioned to the enormity of the caſe, we are too apt to accept of violence and exaggeration inſtead of proof. Our very prejudices and indolence, in this caſe, aſſume the form and dignity of virtue; and at length the ſober dictates of caution and impartiality are utterly diſcarded, or treated as enemies, that would ſeduce us from our duty.

It is no wonder, ſir, if this ſhould be particularly true of the noble audience that liſtened to your Philippic. Men of ſuch ſevere and unblemiſhed manners could ſcarcely be expected to preſerve a due and neceſſary moderation at ſuch a tale

tale of complicated horrors. Whatever could add either pathos or energy to the deſcription was certainly introduced. Here was the great Mogul—"the deſcendant of Tamerlane, a perſonage as high as human veneration can look at," unleſs perhaps it be the godlike mover of the bill, "ſtanding in need almoſt of the common neceſſaries of life*." Here was Seraja Dowla ſold to Mir Jaffeir, Mir Jaffeir to Mir Coſſim; and Mir Coſſim to Mir Jaffeir again †. Then to ſhew that the rage and cruelty of the Eaſt-India company's ſervants know no exceptions of ſex, or no ſex, we are told a moving hiſtory of outrages offered to ladies,

* "The firſt potentate ſold by the company for money was the great Mogul—the deſcendant of Tamerlane. This high perſonage, as high as human veneration can look at," &c.—Speech, p. 17.

"The deſcendant of Tamerlane now ſtands in need almoſt of the common neceſſaries of life."—Ibid. p. 18.

This fact is moſt ſatisfactorily explained in many of the publications in anſwer to Mr. Burke, particularly in the writings of Major Scott. But what does it add to the atrocity of the action, that the great Mogul is the deſcendant of Tamerlane? Tamerlane himſelf was a robber and a ſpoiler, and more deſtructive to mankind than peſtilence, famine, or even the Eaſt-India company.

† Speech, p. 19.

and

and even to eunuchs ‡. The ſtory itſelf of Urſula and her eleven thouſand virgins is almoſt paralleled in that of the nabob of Oude, his two thouſand women, the two ſeraglios more of his near kindred, and the nabob's fourſcore children §.

" Quis talia fando
" Temperet a lachrymis ?"

It is true, ſir, that you had like to have ſpoiled all again by the mention of the venerable " grandmother and the ancient houſehold :" this circumſtance was too powerful for the muſcles of the younger members. But even the great Scriblerus ſometimes touched the improper ſtring ; and when you ſum up all, by complimenting the houſe upon their virtue and independency, it was as impoſſible they ſhould reſiſt, as an ugly woman who hears for the firſt time commendations upon her beauty.

‡ " Their chief eunuchs, who were their agents, their guardians, protectors, perſons of high rank according to the eaſtern manners, and of great truſt, were thrown into dungeons, to make them diſcover their hidden treaſures ; and there they lie at preſent."—Speech, p. 44.

§ " That family and houſehold conſiſted of *two thouſand women*, to which were added two other ſeraglios of near kindred, and ſaid to be extremely numerous, and (as I am well informed) of about fourſcore of the Nabob's children, with all the eunuchs, the ancient ſervants, and a multitude of the dependants of his ſplendid court."—Ibid, p. 45.

But

But I agree with you, ſir, that the preſent is no ſeaſon for mirth or levity; and I never held the opinion that ridicule was the teſt of truth. The points on which we differ are neither to be ſettled by raillery nor declamation, but by the ſober force of truth and argument; and to theſe I return.

You obſerve, ſir, "that the phraſe of the chartered rights of men" is full of affectation, and very unuſual in the diſcuſſion of privileges conferred by charters of the preſent deſcription." I have always conſidered the expreſſion in the ſame light, but for another reaſon. A charter, if I rightly underſtand the expreſſion, comprehends certain powers conferred by the king in virtue of his prerogative. The Eaſt-India company, I believe, may pretend to this ſecurity; but I ſhould hardly think its advocates would much inſiſt upon them, when they can appeal to authorities of higher importance. The firſt eſtabliſhment of the Eaſt-India company upon its preſent baſis, was, as you very well know, an act of the whole legiſlature in 9th and 10th of William and Mary, which engaged to incorporate the lenders of two millions to the government into a company, and inveſted them with certain excluſive rights. So far were the people of that time from inſiſting upon their chartered rights, that the parliament denied the

power

power of the crown to grant a charter of that deſcription; and the old Eaſt-India company exerted all its influence in vain to procure a parliamentary eſtabliſhment. And ſo great was the difference of ideas which then prevailed, that though the old Eaſt-India company could claim no other foundation than a royal charter, which had been repeatedly declared inſufficient by the commons, though it was contended that its members had been guilty of acts ſubverſive of all the rights which they pretended to, when they were heard in oppoſition before the lords, yet they were quietly allowed to continue their franchiſes, till they wiſely *coaleſced* with the new company in 1702, and put an end to their own ſeparate exiſtence.

The form of that act in 1698, from which the preſent company derives its eſtabliſhment, has been the model of all the ſubſequent ones which the legiſlature has choſen to paſs. But the only clauſe, which it is now material to take notice of, is that which empowers the government, upon re-payment of the two millions originally borrowed, and giving three years notice after the twentieth of September 1711, to diſſolve the ſaid company, and reaſſume all the powers with which it had been inveſted.

Let me now, ſir, be permitted to ſtop for a moment, and conſider the nature of the tranſ-

action

action which I have juſt deſcribed, and which I believe you will find faithfully copied from the hiſtory of thoſe times. Here, then, is a ſolemn contract entered into by the whole legiſlature on the one ſide, and certain individuals on the other, which, in conſideration of two millions to be advanced for the public ſervice, ſettles upon them for a limited time certain excluſive privileges, with an equity of redemption in caſe it ſhould appear inexpedient to continue thoſe powers beyond the appointed period. Can it be ſuppoſed, therefore, that either of theſe contracting parties was imagined to retain the right of diſſolving the agreement, whenever it ſhould judge proper, for reaſons of which it was to remain the ſole and unaccountable judge? Is it not, on the contrary, one of the moſt abſurd, ridiculous, and unfounded ideas that ever entered into the head of a human being, even into the head of a politician? Where contracts are entered into between one individual and another, there is always ſome public tribunal which will oppoſe injuſtice and enforce their obſervance: and I believe, till the celebrated receipt-tax of laſt year, there is ſcarcely to be found an inſtance of a government, which did not at leaſt inſiſt upon good faith in its ſubjects, whatever indulgences it might allow itſelf.

It is true, ſir, that there is one eſſential dif-

ference between a government and an individual: an individual may be compelled to the obſervance of his contract, which cannot be done to the former, unleſs by a general inſurrection of the people and a revolution. But does this make any difference in reſpect to moral obligations or principles of juſtice? Or is a ſtate allowed to act upon thoſe principles, which would indelibly involve every individual in ſuch a web of infamy and diſgrace, as would deſtroy his character for ever? It may, perhaps, be anſwered, that this is a liberty in which moſt governments have occaſionally indulged themſelves. I grant the fact, and you will perhaps grant the conſequences: that moſt governments have become ſo univerſally infamous by the practice, that it is difficult to decide whether they are conſidered with more abhorrence by foreign nations, or by their own ſubjects. I have little occaſion to inſiſt upon ſome celebrated manœuvres of this kind in our neighbours; ſince there is ſcarcely a gentleman who voted for the Eaſt-India bill, provided he had words enough to make a motion, that has not, in ſome preceding debate, inſiſted upon the immenſe reſources of this country in compariſon with France, all derived from the conſiſtency of its conduct, and the vaſt extent of its credit.

I muſt confeſs, ſir, I have a kind of antiquated prejudice

prejudice in favour of consistency. I can respect men of every different political opinion, provided they are uniform: but I have never been able to understand that eternal versatility of character which changes public debates into the venal eloquence of wrangling lawyers; nor can I conceive, by any theory which I think myself allowed to mention, whence it arises that these sudden flashes of new conviction are always found to accompany the immediate interests of the party. The gentlemen, who are known by the general name of the Rockingham party, have always distinguished themselves by their inveterate opposition to every parliamentary reform. According to them, it is infinitely better to suffer the noblest constitution of the world to fall into ruins before our eyes, than to change a single stone in the crumbling edifice, or even to add a prop to support it. I have listened, sir, without conviction, to much reasoning of this kind; and, though I do not recollect that many gentlemen have chosen to put their names to their elaborate defence of the present system, I have always allowed that they might possibly be in earnest. Were it necessary, I could produce many instances of the infinite contempt they heap upon speculative principles of right and wrong, and visionary systems of reformation, from all the celebrated pamphlets of the party.

But, in the name of God, why do they not adhere to their own principles? Are the repeated agreements which the whole legiſlature has made with the Eaſt-India company of leſs ſanctity than the ſeptennial bill, which even the boldeſt of your own houſe has never yet contended to be conſtitutional; and which not one of you can now defend, without aſſerting that you have a right to ſubvert the whole ſyſtem of government at your pleaſure? Or, is it imagined, that the ſolid opinions of mankind upon the ſubject of right and juſtice are to be changed by every temporary blaſt that turns the ſtate weathercock of your honorable houſe?

But as to the original act of eſtabliſhment for the Eaſt-India company, it was penned with all the requiſite diſcretion and foreſight. It was a new experiment made upon a very important ſubject of political economy, and therefore the government wiſely reſerved to itſelf a power of diſſolving the company, in caſe experience ſhould evince the neceſſity of doing it. But, if they have never taken advantage of that reſtraining clauſe, during the term of almoſt an hundred years, what are we to infer from this forbearance, excepting that the government found nothing in this company "worthy of death." For my part, I attach ſo much reſpect to the honorable houſe

of

of commons, that I cannot eaſily believe it capable of the groſſeſt contradiction and abſurdity. Now, in my humble opinion, it is difficult to admit this new neceſſity of ſeizing all the property of the Eaſt-India company, and ſubverting an agreement of the whole legiſlature, without throwing ſuch inſinuations either upon the wiſdom or juſtice of our repreſentatives, as even their moſt inveterate enemy would ſcarcely venture.

The laſt agreement, ſir, which is upon record of the government with the Eaſt-India company dates no farther back than the ſpring or ſummer of the year 1781. Lord North had taken advantage of the approaching expiration of their privilege, to give the requiſite notice that he intended to diſſolve the company. Had he actually done this, we might have objected to the policy or wiſdom of the meaſure; but certainly no one could conſiſtently have denied the right. But this was by no means done, or perhaps ever intended; and therefore, after a variety of political altercation, an act paſſed in the ſame form with all the preceding, to extend the Company's excluſive privileges to the year 1791, in conſequence of four hundred thouſand pounds paid to the government.

It is here worth remarking, that the majority, which ratified this agreement, was a majority of the

the ſame houſe of commons which now exiſts; and, conſequently, I am reduced to the unfortunate dilemma of either believing that the honorable houſe acquitted the company of all their crimes and delinquencies to the moment when the act paſſed, or of ſuppoſing that ſo wiſe, ſo virtuous, ſo independent an houſe could not be ignorant of ſuch a baneful catalogue of crimes, and therefore gravely intended to bite the nation, and ſwindle the company out of four hundred thouſand pounds, upon a pretence which they never intended to realize.

I have heard it obſerved, that a ſkilful fencer never expoſes himſelf for the chance of hitting his adverſary; yet this ſeems to be the caſe of your moſt eloquent detail of the pretended crimes of the company. The greater part of theſe atrocious acts were certainly prior to the year 1781. With what propriety, therefore, with what appearance of juſtice does the ſame houſe of commons found a neceſſity of reſcinding its own deliberate engagements, upon allegations, which it either was, or ought to have been acquainted with, at the very moment when it contracted them?

With all the reſpect, ſir, which we may feel either for you or your audience, how is it poſſible that any human being ſhould avoid ſmiling, when he

he hears the privileges of the company attacked upon the principle of their eſtabliſhing a monopoly, within the walls of that very houſe, which inſtituted the monopoly in the laſt century, and has maintained it by ſucceſſive ſales and contracts throughout the preſent*? Still more

* "The Eaſt-India charter is a charter to eſtabliſh monopoly, and to *create* power. Political power and commercial monopoly are not the rights of men; and the rights to them derived from charters, it is fallacious and ſophiſtical to call "the chartered rights of men." Theſe chartered rights (to ſpeak of ſuch charters and of their effects in terms of the greateſt poſſible moderation) do at leaſt ſuſpend the natural rights of mankind at large, and in their very frame and conſtitution are liable to fall into a direct violation of them."—Speech, p. 7.

All this flouriſh appears to me one of the ſtrongeſt inſtances how a good underſtanding may be abuſed. If a legiſlature attempt to ſell more than it poſſeſſes a right to do, the people may be juſtified, perhaps, in reſcinding an agreement made without their conſent, and to their detriment. But what has all this to do with the legiſlature itſelf, whoſe deciſions are to be law and juſtice for all the reſt of the community, reſcinding its own agreements?—Would not this be a plain confeſſion of ignorance, folly, or injuſtice, in the very perſons who aſſume to themſelves the power of deciding for all the reſt? And if this be found to-day, why not to-morrow? If in the laſt agreement, why not in the next?—Would not this bring the legiſlature into ſuch extreme contempt as would tend either to tyranny, or to a diſſolution of all government?—And is this the noble and excellent ſpirit of reform which is to be introduced into the Engliſh government?—"Unde nefas tantum Latiis paſtoribus?"—

Let

more curious is the diſtinction between the ideas of natural and artificial right. What is it to the buyer, whether the houſe chooſe to ſell one or the other? He naturally expects to be maintained in what he has fairly purchaſed. Muſt no one pretend to enter into a contract with any government, without the interference of Grotius, Puffendorf, and Monteſquieu? Or whence do the honorable gentlemen derive their notions of natural right, when they deny to ſeven millions of people the leaſt interference with the choice of their own repreſentatives?

But what, I wonder, would be ſaid to any man in private life, who, after having voluntarily and deliberately entered into a contract, ſhould pretend to reſcind it at will, becauſe it was contrary to his ideas of natural right? Would it not be anſwered, that this was the ſillieſt pretext by which fraud ever attempted to impoſe upon credulity? He would be told that he had ſufficient leiſure to conſider the ſubject, and conſult the delicay of his feelings, before he entered

Let me be pardoned, if I publicly aſſert, that ſuch an idea is diſgraceful to the hitherto untainted reputation of our public faith, and fatal to the confidence which all ſubjects ought to entertain in the juſtice of the legiſlature; worthy only of the ſpirit of tyranny, and moſt happily adapted to root out honeſty and commerce throughout the kingdom.

into

into the engagement: but that little credit would be given to his pretended qualms, when they were evidently dictated by his own intereſt; that juſtice and right were never inconſiſtent with themſelves; and that the firſt duty of both was to fulfil promiſes and engagements.—But what, if all theſe ſcruples ſhould neither tend to a reſtitution of the rights in queſtion to thoſe from whom they were originally taken, or to any indemnification of their value? Muſt we not admire the particular delicacy which breaks its own moſt ſolemn faith and contract, from the ſuggeſtions of conſcience, and then finiſhes by violating thoſe very rights a ſecond time, with as little remorſe as it did the firſt?

For to what, ſir, do all theſe declamations about right and monopoly tend? Will the natural rights of every ſubject in theſe kingdoms to carry on a commerce with India, be leſs invaded when the monopoly is given to ſeven commiſſioners of the parliament, than while it remained in the directors of the company? Or is there the leaſt alteration made, or pretended to be made, in the actual ſtate of that monopoly?

But the plea of ſtate-neceſſity, upon which your honorable friend expatiated with ſo much eloquence, is a topic much more difficult to be

confuted, becauſe it is ſo vague and general as ſcarcely to admit an anſwer. Were there ſome inter-mediate power, indeed, to decide between the contracting parties, it might mean ſomething; but in the preſent caſe it means no more than that a miniſter and a majority may, under the ſubterfuge of general and equivocal terms, violate every engagement they had entered into. For what enterpriſe can be conceived ſo openly flagitious and unjuſt, which may not be juſtified by the ſame perſons, and upon the ſame principles? I will engage to produce an act for veſting all the looms of Mancheſter, or the forges of Birmingham, in ſeven commiſſioners, upon the very ſame principles of ſtate-neceſſity which make ſo great a figure in his ſpeech.

A great metaphyſician, like you, ſir, need not be told, that the expreſſions of right, juſtice, charter, contract, neceſſity, and an hundred more which might be produced, can never in themſelves decide a ſingle controverſy between two individuals of the human ſpecies. All parties allow their exiſtence, and appeal to them in their own favour. Naturally, the underſtanding of one man has an equal claim with that of any other, to be attended to in the controverſy. But as it is evident, that ſcarcely any diſpute would ever be terminated were it to depend

depend upon the entire acquieſcence of one party in the reaſon of another, public tribunals are inſtituted in every ſtate, for the adminiſtration of juſtice and the termination of differences. In theſe tribunals, certain individuals are inveſted with the power of deciding what ſhall be juſtice and law in reſpect to the reſt of the ſociety; not from the ſuppoſition that one man is naturally more infallible than another, but becauſe this method, however imperfect, is all that can be effected by human prudence. It is poſſible to aſcertain the perſon, though not the thing; and while there are eternal diſputes about law and equity, there is ſeldom any concerning the perſon of the judge or chancellor.

To preſerve theſe venerable perſonages even from the ſuſpicion of corruption; to guard againſt the ſurpriſes of private prejudice or paſſion; and to divide the different powers in ſuch a manner as mutually to be a check upon each other, has long been the diſtinguiſhing boaſt of our country and conſtitution. The meaneſt individual cannot be condemned, without his paſſing before ſo many independent authorities as to leave ſcarcely a ſuppoſition of colluſion or injuſtice. Firſt, he muſt be accuſed upon oath before a magiſtrate, who ought to be a private gentleman of independent fortune.

In the next place, he muſt be referred to a body of independent gentlemen, who, if they judge the accuſation falſe or groundleſs, have a right of inſtantly diſmiſſing it; and theſe too are ſworn to the obſervance of impartial juſtice. In the third place, another jury is inveſted with the power of finally deciding, upon oath, his guilt or innocence; and though the number of this body is only twelve, the criminal may peremptorily except to twenty of thoſe who are returned for the office. Theſe men are expreſsly to be choſen out of the peers or equals of the accuſed; that ſo far from having any intereſt in his condemnation, they may have the ſtrongeſt motive to give its proper weight to every plea which can be brought in his favour. The indictment too muſt be preciſe and accurate; that no room may be left for the faſcinations of eloquence, or the wild ſuggeſtions of general and vague accuſation; which are ſeldom employed but to perplex the mind and bewilder the judgment.

Theſe, ſir, are the ſecurities which the Engliſh law affords to the perſon of the meaneſt individual in the kingdom, previous to his being ſubjected even to the judicial authority: and I have mentioned them thus at length, that the public may contraſt them with the proceedings of a certain

tain honorable houſe in reſpect to the greateſt company of merchants in the univerſe; men, who, in whatever light they may be conſidered by moraliſts, have done much for the opulence and glory of the kingdom. And I muſt confeſs, it ſtrikes me with no little idea of "the inconſtancy of human greatneſs, and the ſtupendous revolutions that have happened in our age of wonders," when I ſee a ſet of men, who have juſt loſt thirteen provinces, ſitting in judgment upon, and diſpoſſeſſing thoſe who have added to the Britiſh empire "281,412 ſquare miles; which form a territory larger than any European dominion, Ruſſia and Turkey excepted *."

"Nunc et oves ultro fugiat lupus: aurea duræ
"Mala ferant quercus: narciſſo floreat alnus."

Their proceedings have been worthy of the cauſe; for, in the confuſion of powers and characters which they have aſſumed to themſelves, it is difficult to diſtinguiſh any thing of reaſon, juſtice, or even of a regular ſyſtematic enquiry. Firſt, they chew the cud of evidence and fact in their ſecret and ſelect committees; which is afterwards to be brought up again half-digeſted, and to become the loathſome nutriment of a criminal proſecution. Then, in their judicial character, they ſit to determine upon the merits of this very

* Speech, p. 12.

evidence,

evidence, which they have before prepared. The accuſers are certain orators of their own body; who, inſtead of confining themſelves to ſpecific charges, or any of the ſalutary forms which long experience has eſtabliſhed as neceſſary to the impartial adminiſtration of juſtice, deal out their general invectives, and unſupported accuſations, without examining a witneſs, or even waiting for an anſwer. Thus is the affair hurried on according to the true principles of ſummary juſtice, and brought to a ſpeedy termination; and then too, the ſame honorable houſe aſſumes its laſt, and, as its enemies would obſerve, its moſt conſiſtent character, that of public executioner; diſpatches the offender in an inſtant, and ſeizes upon all his ſpoils as hangman's wages.

Thus, ſir, have I gone through the firſt part of my diſagreeable taſk, in reſpect to the celebrated Eaſt-India buſineſs. One plea, indeed, has been omitted, that of an honorable lord, your late enemy, but preſent friend and colleague, who juſtifies the invaſion of the company's rights by the precedent of his having already violated them in 1772. The argument, I truſt, will make but few proſelytes out of his own houſe; but it is ſuch an illuſtration of my ſubject that I cannot paſs it over in ſilence.

To the Engliſh nation, therefore, at large I muſt

muſt recommend the conſideration of another ſpecies of neceſſity; the neceſſity of watching, with a ſevere and conſtant attention, the operations of men who call themſelves the repreſentatives of the people, yet are continually ſetting that people at defiance. They reſiſt, with an inflexible obſtinacy, every attempt to bring them nearer to the only purpoſe for which they exiſt; yet there is nothing ſo remote, or ſacred, as to eſcape the interference of their avarice and ambition. Even the moſt ſcandalous outrages, the moſt unjuſtifiable attempts upon the rights of others, if once ſubmitted to, are boldly brought forward as precedents, and uſed as arguments for new ones. If a miniſter dare ſomething of peculiar atrocity or injuſtice, "brevibus gyaris aut carcere dignum," it is railed at by his opponents, but enforced by a majority of his creatures. Suppoſing the wheel of fortune to turn round, and the friends of the people to graſp the diſtinctions which they long have aimed at, what is to be expected from their promiſes and their public ſpirit? That they ſhould reſign the uſurpations of their predeceſſors, or endeavour to give the nation any ſecurity for their liberties? That indeed would ſhew a moſt contemptible ignorance of public men, and the hiſtory of parties in this country. But what you may ſafely expect is that they

they ſhould improve upon all that has been perpetrated by their predeceſſors, and ſeverely realize the fooliſh vaunts of a fooliſh king: "My little finger ſhall be thicker than my father's loins: for whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke; my father chaſtized you with whips, but I will chaſtize you with ſcorpions."

MARIUS.

LET-

LETTER VIII.

To Edmund Burke, Esq.

SIR,

IF, in the present distracted state of this country, the freedom with which I have considered the conduct of our representatives required an apology, I could use no better one than a quotation from your own celebrated Speech: "They must grant to me, in my turn, that all political power which is set over men, and that all privilege claimed or exercised in exclusion of them, being wholly artificial, and, for so much, a derogation from the natural equality of mankind at large, ought to be some way or other exercised ultimately for their benefit."

"If this is true with regard to every species of political dominion, and every description of commercial privilege, none of which can be original self-derived rights, or grants for the more private benefit of the holders, then such rights or privileges, or whatever else you choose to call them, are all in the strictest sense a *trust*; and it is of the very essence of every trust to be

rendered *accountable*; and even totally to *ceaſe*, when it ſubſtantially varies from the purpoſes for which alone it could have a lawful exiſtence *."

I have conſidered, in my former letter, not ſo much the pretended abuſes in the adminiſtration of our Eaſt-Indian poſſeſſions, of which I confeſs myſelf no adequate judge, (though I do not believe nine tenths of your own honorable houſe more qualified for the deciſion,) as the method of eſtabliſhing them, and the juriſdiction of the tribunal before which they are brought. I have attempted to prove, that, in the whole

* Speech, p. 7.—This extraordinary confeſſion puts me in mind of the following ſtory, to be found, I believe, in Pilpay's Fables. A certain man, very uxorioufly inclined, had a young and beautiful wife, who always treated him with the moſt open averſion and diſdain; till one night, ſpying a thief in the room, ſhe took refuge in the arms of her huſband, who was aſleep, with ſuch unuſual fondneſs as awakened him. But when the good man learned the cauſe of her terrors, he called out in raptures to the thief, who had been alarmed and was moving off, "Pray, ſir, ſtay! the happineſs you have procured me is ſo great that you are welcome to all I have in return."—This condeſcenſion in their repreſentatives is certainly as new to the people of England as was the fondneſs of the wife to the poor doating huſband; but they do not ſeem equally grateful: or have they already given ſo much, that they have no more to beſtow?

proceeding,

proceeding, nothing is to be found worthy the gravity, dignity, or diſintereſtedneſs of a Britiſh ſenate; that nothing could be a greater mockery of all ideas of right and juſtice, than that the ſame perſons ſhould ſit in judgment upon the validity of their own engagments, who had contracted them originally, and ratified them at repeated intervals; that, if the honorable houſe pretended to ſit as a court of juſtice, it has not obſerved a ſingle rule or decorum which could convince the nation of its impartiality; not even the flimſy forms and punctilios which attended the quo warrantos of the laſt century, or the condemnations of Sydney and Ruſſel. It was a ſpecies of ſummary juſtice which improves upon Aſiatic models, and will afford inſtructions to each ſucceeding Jefferies for ages. But another conſideration equally important remains: ſuppoſing the houſe of commons had been a tribunal ever ſo well adapted to the enquiry, ſuppoſing the guilt of the Eaſt-India company to have been ever ſo clearly proved, what is the nature of the remedy propoſed for theſe diſorders, and what the benefit which we may fairly expect from its adminiſtration? For even if all the abuſe, which the invention of intereſt and malice combined have heaped together, ſhould be admitted, it will not follow that the propoſed remedy is adapt-

ed to remove the evil, or even to palliate its moſt alarming ſymptoms. This examination, ſir, will furniſh a proper comment for your ſpeech, and may fill up ſome chaſms which I have obſerved between the premiſes and the concluſions.

For even ſuppoſing certain abuſes ſhould have been clearly proved to exiſt in the adminiſtration of the Eaſt India Company's affairs, ſhould thoſe abuſes alſo be of ſufficient magnitude to juſtify the interference of parliament, it will by no means follow, that Mr. Fox's pretended bill of reform was either neceſſary, or adapted to the purpoſe. But in order to make this ariſe as an inevitable concluſion, you aſſume the ſtrangeſt ſeries of facts that I believe was ever obtruded npon the public. For firſt you conclude "that this body (meaning the whole body of proprietors), being totally perverted from the purpoſes of its inſtitution, is utterly incorrigible; and becauſe they are incorrigible, both in conduct and conſtitution, power ought to be taken out of their hands: juſt on the ſame principles on which have been made all the juſt changes and revolutions of government that have taken place ſince the beginning of the world."* To aſſume that any body of people is not only corrupted, but incorrigible, is, to a plain and common underſtanding, one of the moſt extraordinary

* Speech, p. 88.

traordinary poſitions that I think was ever ventured in a ſerious publication. It ſhould ſeem, ſir, that you hold the doctrine of free-will in ſo entire and abſolute a manner, that you leave no room for the application of new motives to the mind; or elſe you fall into the contrary extreme, and aſſert that the conduct will remain the ſame, though every principle of action ſhould be changed. Chooſe which you will of theſe abſurdities; for they are both before you. Nor is it a common ſpecies of corruption alone of which they are accuſed, ſuch as ſome ignorant people have attributed to a virtuous majority, the preferring their private to the public intereſt; but the more extraordinary one of not only being incapable of regulating their own affairs, but of becoming ſo by any proceſs that can be operated even by the omnipotence of parliament. Yet this incorrigible body is compoſed upon the ſame principles with the Bank, or any other public company that has ever exiſted; comprehends many hundred individuals, among whom may be numbered the principal gentry of the kingdom, and the moſt opulent merchants of the city of London.

I ſhould imagine, ſir, that were a foreigner, totally unverſed in the party hiſtory of this kingdom, to hear ſo extraordinary an aſſertion, he would

would neceſſarily imagine that the whole preceding hiſtory of the Eaſt-India company contained nothing but the detail of public frauds and private blunders: more eſpecially, when he reflected upon the repeated generoſity which had been uſed in an arbitrary government, like that of France, to ſupport a ſimilar eſtabliſhment, he would conclude that the national aſſiſtance and generoſity here muſt have been ſo repeatedly abuſed as to leave no farther room for pardon or experiment. Neceſſity, he would obſerve, may indeed juſtify, as it occaſions every attempt; but it muſt be a very uncommon kind of neceſſity that can induce the government of a free ſtate to deſert all its uſual principles, and to uſe a diſcretionary authority with greater rigour than was ever known in an arbitrary one. But what would be his aſtoniſhment, when he was told the real hiſtory of this oppreſt and perſecuted company? That, incorrigible as it is now repreſented to be, and radically corrupted, it had, by its own exertions, obtained a degree of greatneſs perhaps unparalleled in the hiſtory of the world. That its commerce, while it poured into the boſom of the mother-country all the varied productions of the fruitful Eaſt, had afforded ſuch ample ſupplies to its revenue as would alone ſupport the expences of a moderate ſtate. That its

preſent

preſent diſtreſſes were chiefly the temporary effects of a ruinous and inevitable war, in which it had been involved by the ambition of thoſe very patriots who now exult with a malignant joy over the wounds which they have occaſioned, and, inſtead of binding them up, are haſtening to draw forth the vital fluids by the orifice. Its own reſources, it would be added, have nurſed it up to a degree of power and opulence which awes one portion of the globe, while it excites the envy of all the reſt. Although originally intended for commerce alone, it has gradually extended its power and influence, till it has involved the fates of mighty empires, and attracted them to itſelf. Whatever may be now advanced, by intereſt or malevolence, about the crimes and incapacity of its ſervants, is amply confuted even by the unexaggerated detail of events. What ſtronger evidence can be given of the ſolid baſis upon which any human power is founded, than its capacity to reſiſt and triumph over the mightieſt attacks? This, even excluſively, is the boaſt of the Engliſh Eaſt-India company. With every diſadvantage of difficulty and diſtance, it has prevailed, not only over the feeble oppoſition of Aſiatic princes, but over all the efforts of one of the moſt politic and warlike nations in the univerſe. Could this have been effected without a ſpirit, both of counſel,

and

and of enterprise?—No—whatever may be the representations of parliamentary orators, the world at large will refute the wild and chimerial accusation. Whatever may be the demerits of the company, whatever the catalogue of its crimes, the comparative series of its ministers may certainly vie with that of any modern government of Europe. It has undoubtedly produced warriors of intrepid minds and heroes of immortal fame; chiefs that have dared, in their employers and country's cause, all that men can dare; that have executed every thing which the present colleagues of Mr. Burke have *failed* to do. Even now, "on evil days though fall'n, and evil tongues," it can boast of characters that would do honour to any nation; the foremost of whom is that very culprit, that seems singly, like an electric rod upon a noble edifice, to have protected the building beneath, while he attracts the fury of the tempest upon himself. Yet even he, "scathed," as he may appear, by all the lightnings of parliamentary vengeance, nor asks the mercy, nor deprecates the rage of his accusers: he is ready to leave the throne of half the East in order to meet their impeachments; he bids them take his life, if any thing worthy of death shall be found in his conduct; nor dare his most inveterate enemies accept the offer.

Is

Is this, ſir, the language of party or cabal? If it be, I wiſh it were oftener heard within the walls of even your own virtuous houſe. It is the voice of a man who is equally unacquainted with Mr. Haſtings and his friends; totally unconnected with the affairs and intereſts of the Eaſt-India company. It is the voice of a man who has never been ſeen at the levees of either your friends or antagoniſts; who has never flattered even the people, much as he loves them, in their deluſions, or cringed to them for their ſupport. But it is the voice of an independent man, that dares to expreſs his ſentiments in defiance of the moſt powerful faction of this country, and that has a character to hazard upon the ſtake. As to Mr. Haſtings, his abilities are ſo undoubted, and there is ſo ſtrong an impreſſion of a great and noble ambition in all his actions, that I cannot help admiring him; and that admiration, I confeſs, makes me ready to eſteem him: I am intereſted in his fate, and wiſh to find that he has added the praiſe of integrity to that of a comprehenſive underſtanding and elevated mind. If ever there was an individual who deſerved to have the weakneſſes or defects of human nature overſhadowed by his triumphs, it certainly is Mr. Haſtings; yet, were his achievements and his qualities ten times greater

than they are, I never would interpoſe to ſcreen him from public juſtice, if he has deſerved it; on the contrary, I would be the firſt to mount the roſtrum, and arreſt him in his triumphal progreſs, did I live in a country where any puniſhments were inflicted upon public guilt, or where private virtue might direct the vengeance of the nation. But ſuch as he is, he does not deſerve to fall unheard. His fate ſhould be an honorable wound, in fair and equal battle; not to be trodden down by a baſe and promiſcuous rabble that are only ſtruggling for his ſpoils. Let him fall hereafter, a victim to the offended genius of Aſia, and to the inſulted juſtice of his country; but let him, while he lives, enjoy the honors and the veneration of an hero. His death, whenever it arrives, will neither diſgrace his friends, nor be unworthy of himſelf; it will be ſolemn and lamented, the cataſtrophe of an awful drama: juſtice will be expiated and ſorrow for the ſtroke; it will not refuſe the conſolation of an honorable interment, or deny a martial trophy to adorn his tomb: it is envy alone that would ſteal the noble corpſe, and hew it out to glut the fury of parliamentary hounds*.

This,

* There are two circumſtances eſſential to every free ſtate; that no individual ſhould either be elevated beyond the reach of public juſtice, or condemned unheard. Nothing can be a ſurer preſage of approaching ruin to ſuch a ſtate

This, ſir, like many parts of your own Speech, is declamation; but it is not, as they are,

ſtate than that degree of power which fruſtrates all enquiry, or that degree of violence which tramples upon the ſalutary forms of criminal inveſtigation. The more enormous is the imputed guilt, the more cautious ſhould we be in examining whether it really exiſt. An unfortunate man, not very long ago, fell a victim to the odium which had been excited by the atrocious nature of the crime alleged againſt him; and this muſt ſometimes happen, in ſpite of the moſt excellent ſyſtem of criminal proceedings that any country could ever boaſt. How cautious then ought we to be in pronouncing upon the guilt of thoſe who are abſent, and where the ſcene of accuſation lies in another hemiſphere! I am very ill qualified to decide concerning the merit of Mr. Haſtings; but I am ſufficiently qualified to pronounce that not one of the charges againſt him has yet been proved to the ſatisfaction of any impartial man: nor is there one of them which has not been denied, and very forcibly, at leaſt very ſpeciouſly, invalidated. Mr. Burke, in the fervour of his complimental eloquence, has this paſſage (p. 81): "This man, whoſe deep reach of thought, whoſe large legiſlative conceptions, and whoſe grand plans of policy, make the moſt ſhining part of our reports, *from whence we have all learned our leſſons, if we have learned any good ones*; this man, from whoſe materials thoſe gentlemen who have leaſt acknowledged it, have yet ſpoken as from a brief," &c. This paſſage, I muſt confeſs, appears to me a very unfortunate one; ſince it ſeems to place the foundation of all the bitter charges, both againſt Mr. Haſtings and the Eaſt-India company, upon the evidence and repreſentations of one gentleman alone, and that gentleman known to have been upon terms of perſonal enmity with the parties accuſed. Whatever may be the integrity and abilities of any

are, unſupported by fact or argument. And are the proprietors of the Eaſt-India ſtock to be calumniated with every diſgraceful epithet that can ſting the heart, or degrade the character of man, merely becauſe they did not recall a miniſter like Mr. Haſtings, at the inſtigation of what now compoſes a majority of the commons? On the contrary, it would have been madneſs to have done it; and it is the ſtrongeſt proof both of their underſtanding and their independence, that they have dared to diſregard the idle thunders of ſuch a vote, and to follow the dictates of their own better ſenſe. Yet, that they have dared to do this, and to maintain the freedom of their own appointments, in oppoſition to the ſenſe of the committees of the houſe of commons, is a ſufficient reaſon for your declaring "that the condition of the company is incorrigible." Strange logic indeed! and a new ſpecies of dilemma! Either the whole corporation is at once to reſign its legal powers

man, common juſtice requires that allowance ſhould be made for thoſe paſſions which are inſeparable from human nature: nor are ſuch accuſations as are produced in the Speech I allude to, to be admitted upon the teſtimony of any individual in the univerſe; ſtill leſs upon another perſon's repreſentation, even of that very teſtimony. For Mr. Burke himſelf allows, *that he has learned his leſſon*, without producing his maſter.

into

into the hands of a majority of the houſe, to change the tenour of its proceedings, diſplace its ſervants, and manage its commercial affairs by every caprice of men, who, whatever they may know, can know but little of India affairs, or elſe the puniſhment of this *audacity** is to be the confiſcation of all their privileges, and the forfeiture of all their property. I have heard of an highwayman, that preſented a piſtol to a gentleman's breaſt with this apoſtrophe, "Sir, give me all your money, or elſe by G—d you'll be robbed." I will not pain your delicacy by the application of the ſtory; but will you pleaſe to inform us, where was the crime of the proprietors reſiſting a vote of the houſe? If it be a crime, why are they not proceeded againſt and puniſhed in a legal way? But if it be no more a crime for them to perſiſt in maintaining their own appointment, than it would be in me to keep a footman in defiance of a vote of the houſe of commons, how can this eſtabliſh either their corruption or their incorrigibility?

But let me be permitted to analyze your Speech, and, throwing the pomp of metaphor

* "Ever ſince the beginning of this ſeſſion, the ſame act of audacity was repeated."—P. 87.

and

and alluſion aſide, to conſider the ſimple facts and arguments which it contains. Neither you, nor any of your honorable friends, can deny that the Eaſt-India company have, for a conſiderable ſpace of time previous to theſe accuſations, managed their affairs with conſiderable attention and ability. Their proſperity is a ſufficient proof of this and the ſtability of their empire. Now, ſir, the whole period which is contained in your accuſations ſcarcely extends to a dozen years. You were their defender in the year 1769, if you are the author of the pamphlet called, "Obſervations on a late State of the Nation;" and you have defended them as low as the year 1781, if any faith is to be given to the parliamentary Debates. Even in your preſent Speech you unguardedly allow "the fact is, that for a long time there was a ſtruggle, a faint one, indeed, between the company and their ſervants *; of the directors you affirm, "there have been, ſir, very frequently, men of the greateſt integrity and virtue amongſt them †:" yet, after having paraded through an hundred pages of mere declamation and vague accuſations, which have been repeatedly anſwered and contradicted, you gravely con-

* Speech, p. 88. † Ibid. p. 83.

clude

clude that the whole body both of proprietors and directors is utterly incorrigible; the one for oppoſing the vote of parliament; the other, I ſuppoſe, for yielding obedience to it *. I believe ſuch a concluſion derived from ſuch premiſes was never before hazarded by a man of your abilities: for what can be inferred even after the moſt implicit acquieſcence in all your charges, not one of which has been authenticated, unleſs that the ſervants of the company have for ſome years paſt been guilty of miſbehaviour, and that the proprietors, piqued, according to your own account †, by the interference

" * The directors, ſtill retaining ſome ſhadow of reſpect to this houſe, inſtituted an enquiry themſelves, which continued from June to October; and, after an attentive peruſal and full conſideration of papers, reſolved to take ſteps for removing the perſons who had been the objects of our reſolutions."—Speech, p. 86.—Yet, p. 89, the directors themſelves are all wolves. " He would appoint the wolf a guardian of the ſheep; but he has invented a curious muzzle, by which this protecting wolf ſhall not be able to open his jaws above an inch or two at the utmoſt."

May it not be aſked whether any perſon was ever more conſtantly repreſented in the light of a wolf, than Lord North by Mr. Burke and all his friends?—Yet a late tranſaction is a proof that wolves may either change their nature, or be moſt happily reſtrained from miſchief, by means of a *coalition muzzle*.

† " Even the attempt you have made to enquire into their practices, and to reform abuſes, has raiſed and piqued them

terference of the commons, have not ſhewn all due reſpect to their illuſtrious vote?

But why muſt they be for this reaſon incorrigible? Is not every body of men ſubject to errors and to paſſions? Do not a calmer conſideration of affairs, and longer experience, frequently point out the neceſſity of an alteration of conduct? And why might not the ſame revolution of things take place in reſpect to them, which we have ſeen exemplified in the houſe of commons? For almoſt twenty years, ſir, the nation has heard you and your friends declaiming againſt venality and ſecret influence; for almoſt twenty years, if we can believe your repreſentations, there has been ſcarcely a meaſure which has not begun in folly and terminated in wickedneſs. This is a longer ſpace of reprobation than what you have alleged againſt the Eaſt-India company. Yet ſee how time, in its ſilent progreſs, accompliſhes the moſt ſtupendous revolutions! This houſe, which formerly was a den of thieves, is now become the temple of the Lord; "an independent houſe of

them to a far more regular and ſteady ſupport."—Speech, p. 88.—May it not be ſuſpected that reſentment againſt an interference, which they juſtly thought improper, might act upon the minds of the proprietors, as much as this original ſin of corruption?

commons;

commons; an houſe of commons which has, by its own virtue, deſtroyed the influence of parliamentary ſubſerviency." †

But as to the idea of any body of men, that is in a continual ſtate of fluctuation, being incurably and neceſſarily corrupt, the idea is as unphiloſophical as the purpoſe for which it is introduced is unjuſt. Is it for me, ſir, to inform a man, that inſiſts ſo frequently and with ſo much pleaſure upon his acquaintance with mankind, that every body of men is acted upon by circumſtances, and changes its character in uniſon with the general changes which ſurround it? Even parliaments have been diſintereſted and defended the liberties of the people. If they are grown indifferent to theſe circumſtances, it is becauſe the general relaxation of the times admits the depravity; and becauſe faction and intrigue have been diſcovered to be more effectual ways of making a fortune than virtue or integrity. But ſhould the people once more rouze from their lethargy, and demand a ſevere account from their repreſentatives, of all the millions which they have ſquandered, of all the miſmanagement which they have connived at; ſhould they for the future inſiſt upon private virtue and public conſiſtency as indiſ-

† Speech, p. 97.

penſable qualifications, we might perhaps ſee a change more extraordinary, in a certain honorable houſe, than any which mark the year 1783.

But as to the defenceleſs proprietors of Eaſt-India ſtock, it is an equal reflection upon your houſe to have ſuffered their crimes and obſtinacy ſo long as you pretend, and to be incapable of correcting it now. All men, in every ſituation, are naturally guided by the impulſe of their own intereſt; nor does a government ever depend upon the virtue of its ſubjects, but upon the wiſdom of its own regulations. It aſcertains the crime, it fixes the mode of proſecution, it eſtabliſhes the penalty. Look, I pray you, ſir, at your own ſtatutes; there you will find a thouſand of the moſt innocent actions in life prohibited under the ſevereſt penalties. Men may not conſume the product of their own fields, they may not ſee the light of heaven, they may not ſteep an handful of barley-corns in water, without the leave of government. Lately you have undertaken that no man ſhall diſcharge the duties of common honeſty, that not a labourer ſhall pay his ale-houſe ſcore, without the interference of government; and rather than fail, you hold out an univerſal patronage to every villain throughout the kingdom. Do you imagine, ſir, that men ſubmit willingly

willingly and chearfully to theſe abſurd oppreſſions? No; they curſe your parties and your politics *in every tongue*, by every *form of religion*, which prevails throughout the empire. But hard neceſſity compels, the iron hand of power, and the terrors of impending puniſhment. Are you able to do all this, and are you obliged to yield to the obſtinacy alone of India proprietors; men that are chained down in the midſt of the capital; who are every inſtant expoſed to your power, and obnoxious to your vengeance; whoſe fortunes are the conſtant pledges of their conduct, and expoſed, if they diſobey, to all your conſcientious encroachments? But pardon me, ſir, if I tell you that the whole ſcheme is ſuch a chaos of abſurdity, bad reaſoning, and oppreſſion, as never before diſgraced a government.

Men will certainly neither yield up their property or their liberty to the pretended neceſſities of government, ſo long as they can retain them. But are the reports of the committees to enquire into the frauds practiſed upon the revenue, a ſufficient reaſon to pronounce that the brewers, the diſtillers, and the numerous other traders who are now the daily victims of the exciſe, are become incorrigible; and therefore to inveſt their ſhops, their warehouſes, their diſtilleries,

in parliamentary commiſſioners? Yet the principle is equally applicable; with this difference only, that after ſome hundred pages of declamation, not a ſingle action has been proved againſt the Eaſt-India proprietors, which does not ſpring from their undoubted right.

But from the firſt ill-omened hour, the year 1767 *, when the affairs of the company were

* It is worth while to conſider the following account of that tranſaction.—"The Eaſt-India company had for a good while ſolicited the miniſtry for a negociation, by which they propoſed to pay largely for ſome advantages in their trade, and for the renewal of their charter. This had been the former method of tranſacting with that body. Government having only leaſed the monopoly for ſhort terms, the company has been obliged to reſort to it frequently for renewals. Theſe two parties had always negociated (on the true principle of credit) not as government and ſubject, but as equal dealers, on the footing of mutual advantage. The public had derived great benefit from ſuch dealing. But at that time new ideas prevailed," &c. &c.—See the curious paſſage at length in a pamphlet called, "Obſervations on a late State of the Nation," p. 89.

The following perhaps may not be inapplicable to the preſent times. "In conſequence of this ſcheme, the terrors of a parliamentary enquiry were hung over them. A judicature was aſſerted in parliament to try this queſtion. But, leſt this judicial character ſhould chance to inſpire certain ſtubborn ideas of law right, it was argued, that the judicature was arbitrary, and ought not to determine by the rules of law, but by their opinion of policy and expediency. Nothing exceeded the violence of ſome of the managers, except their impatience. They were bewildered by their paſſions, and by their want of knowledge, or want of conſideration of the ſubject."—Ibid, p. 90.

expoſed

expoſed to the prophane and licentious eyes of the houſe, it was eaſy to foreſee how the interference would end, and what was the reformation intended. Neither faith, nor gratitude, nor promiſes, can bind the rapacity of miniſters and their virtuous majorities. In vain might the company plead their merits with the country; the numerous advantages which it continually derived from their commerce; the millions with which it had enriched the public revenue beyond example, almoſt beyond calculation! when once a government is thoroughly corrupted, wealth and proſperity are crimes againſt the ſtate, and the name of private right or franchiſe becomes rebellion. The ſpirit of deſpotiſm is blind as it is intolerant, and the nobleſt trees of the foreſt muſt fall, to ſave the trouble of gathering the fruit.

This, and not the deſire of reformation, has, I fear, guided all the invaſions which have been made upon the company's rights; from the famous bill which prevented their ſending over ſupervifors † to examine and correct the ſtate of their affairs, down to the preſent, which puniſhes them for the omiſſion, by the confiſcation of all their property. To diſtract their counſels, and

† In the year 1772.

embarraſs

embarraſs their affairs; to continue every abuſe, but fruſtrate every plan of reformation, till loaded with a weight of public odium and private diſtreſſes, they might ſink for ever into the bottomleſs gulf of miniſterial influence; has this, ſir, been, or has it not, the uniform, undeviating policy of government?—While you pauſe upon this important queſtion, I will take my leave of you for the preſent, with the intention of renewing our correſpondence.

MARIUS.

FINIS.

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